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RELIGION OF FAMILY  
AS RELATED TO THE AMOUNT OF  
SEX EDUCATION RECEIVED IN THE HOME

by

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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this thesis was to determine whether the perceived amount of sex education information transmitted to students by their parents was related to the religious affiliation of the family. A total of 189 University Juniors and Seniors, who were enrolled in a Human Sexuality course, completed a survey which was designed to measure the amount of sex education received from their parents.

Included in this sample were Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant students, as well as students with no religious affiliation. A questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions of the amount of sex education discussed or presented by their parents.

The overall findings of this study indicate that religious affiliation had little or no bearing on the amount of sex education received in the home. The key finding of this study was that the religious affiliations' beliefs about sexuality are not taught by the parents to their children.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents,  
Joseph and Dorothy Wallet,  
for their support throughout  
all of my academic endeavors.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	4
METHODOLOGY . . . . .	33
RESULTS . . . . .	37
DISCUSSION . . . . .	65
APPENDIX A - COVER LETTER FOR INSTRUMENT . . . . .	76
APPENDIX B - INSTRUMENT . . . . .	78
APPENDIX C - PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR ALL STUDENTS . . . . .	82
APPENDIX D - PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR CATHOLIC STUDENTS . . . . .	89
APPENDIX E - PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR JEWISH STUDENTS . . . . .	94
APPENDIX F - PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR PROTESTANT STUDENTS . . . . .	99
APPENDIX G - PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR STUDENTS WITH NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION . . . . .	105
LIST OF REFERENCES . . . . .	111

## LIST OF TABLES

Percentage of Parents Who Expect to Discuss Each Sexual Topic . . . . .	8
Sources of Information Concerning Sex . . . . .	10
Sources of Information - North America . . . . .	11
Sources of Sexual Information for Young Adults by Topic Areas . . . . .	12
Percentage Breakdown for All Students . . . . .	83
Percentage Breakdown for Catholic Students . . . . .	90
Percentage Breakdown for Jewish Students . . . . .	95
Percentage Breakdown for Protestant Students . . . . .	100
Percentage Breakdown for Students With No Religious Affiliation . . . . .	106



## INTRODUCTION

Human sexuality is a developmental process. All individuals are sexual beings from their conception to their subsequent deaths. Early childhood experiences, as well as present and future experiences, combine to form an individual's sexual self. "Sexual awareness, attitudes, and behaviors are learned within sociocultural contexts that define appropriate sexuality for members." (Pocs, 1987-1988) Many of the fundamental values about sexuality that any individual holds are well established before he or she enters a school environment.

Religion is a major source of how individuals form concepts of themselves sexually. This theory is supported in the following quote from Hyde (1986) in Understanding Human Sexuality: "Religion and ethics are important influences on people's behaviors, especially in matters of sex..." Religion gives us a base for developing a sense of right and wrong. Religious views and attitudes are likely to strongly influence how sexual information is presented to children.

The primary goal of this thesis was to determine whether the perceived amount of sex education information transmitted to students by their parents was related to the religious affiliation of the family. A total of 189 University Juniors and Seniors, who were enrolled in a Human Sexuality course, completed a survey which was designed to measure the amount of sex education received from their parents. Included in

this sample were Jewish , Catholic, and Protestant students, as well as students with no religious affiliation. A questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions of the amount of sex education discussed or presented by their parents.

As a Graduate Teaching Assistant in a college level human sexuality course, the researcher has noted that a sizable number of students mention their religion when making a statement about the amount of sex education received in the home. It, therefore, appears that the students have made a connection between their family of orientation's religion and the discussion of sexual issues within the home.

It was the belief of this researcher that a relationship would be evident between a religious organization's stand on sexual issues and the quantity of discussion its adherants supplied to their children. For example, if a religious organization did not approve of the practice of contraception, its adherants would be unlikely to discuss this topic in any depth with their children. In effect, the topic would be treated as "taboo" because it is a forbidden practice within the church. Other sexual topics which are viewed as natural and positive within the church would be more likely to elicit a greater degree of discussion from parents with their children. This theory was purely speculative. Observation and informal discussion with persons of various religious affiliations contributed to the development of this theory.

Several studies have been conducted to determine the amount of sex education parents have discussed with their children. Most studies have looked at which sexual topics (menstruation, sexual intercourse, etc.) are discussed more often than others, not the degree to which each individual topic is discussed by each parent. Measurements of the amount each sexual topic is discussed by each parent will be conducted in this study.

The Review of Literature provides a summary of research that has measured the parent's role in determining the quantity of sex education discussed in the home, but no studies have been found which relate religious affiliation as a variable in determining the amount of sex education received in the home. This thesis has been conducted to better understand the role of religion in influencing the amount of sex education received in the home.

For a sexual belief system to be conveyed from the religious affiliation to the parents, and consequently to the children, it must be assumed that the parents agree with the religious affiliation's stand on sexual issues and will convey those same beliefs to their children.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have been completed to better determine what role parents play in their children's sex education. Sol Gordon is one such researcher. Many of his books and articles reflect his research with university students.

In an article entitled, "What Kids Need to Know", Sol Gordon makes reference to a study he has conducted that researched the question of how much sex education children receive from their parents. Over a period of 12 years, over 8,000 Syracuse University Students were surveyed on the topic. The results indicated that fewer than 15 percent of the students reported that they received meaningful sex education from their parents.

In another study by Sol Gordon (1986), students (450 each semester) in a Syracuse University Human Sexuality class were asked to read Did the Sun Shine Before you Were Born (1979), a children's sex education book geared for 4- to 7-year-olds, by Sol and Judith Gordon. The students were then to ask their parents to read it. Afterward they were to interview their parents. According to Gordon, "The students were, for the most part, astonished by their parents' responses, and regardless whether the critique of the book was positive or negative, about 85 percent of the students reported that it was the best sexuality discussion they'd ever had with one or both parents."

A third study, conducted in the 1960's by Sol Gordon, is also cited in his article "Sexuality Education - Do it Right Your Time Around". This study consisted of 100 teenagers (50 boys and 50 girls). The teenagers were asked if their parents had talked to them about sex. All replied "no". The parents were then asked if they had talked to them about sex; all replied "yes". "When pushed, nearly all girls remembered that their mothers had talked to them about menstruation. The rest of the communication could be summed up in one word: don't. Some boys eventually recalled 'going out for a walk' or a discussion about the 'birds and the bees'." It is this researcher's opinion that the 100 teenagers responded "no" to a discussion with parents about sex because they could not recall any meaningful sexual discussions.

An often cited reason for the lack of communication between parents and children is that the parents are not comfortable with their own sexuality. "Parents often have difficulty admitting to themselves that their children are sexual beings and may feel inadequately prepared to be sex educators." (Kelly, 1988) Secondly, that the parents received little or no sex education from their parents when they were children. As Gordon states in his article, "What Kids Need to Know", "Without one's parents to draw upon as a model, the cycle of noncommunication is repeated from generation to generation".

Kelly in his book, Sexuality Today: The Human Perspective, remarks about his ideas about the roots of the problem concerning the lack of communication between parents and their children when it comes to discussing human sexuality issues. "There are a number of attitudes that have hindered sex education efforts. One, certainly, is a general reluctance and embarrassment about discussing the whole area of sex openly. At the same time, adults often mistakenly assume that with the new availability of sex information, young people already know everything about sex."

Still other researchers cite additional factors. Rosenfeld et. al. state: "Even sophisticated parents may feel uncertain of their own sexual values. Some parents lack accurate information. Questions may bring back a parent's own unhappy childhood sexual experiences, or evidence of awakening sexuality in their teenage children may be disconcerting." (Katchadourian, 1989)

It would appear as if a solution for better sexual communication lies in finding ways to develop better communication skills between parents and their children. Still the question remains: Do children want to receive information about sexuality from their parents? It appears that the overwhelming answer is yes. "Studies have shown that from 50 to 90 percent of respondents would prefer to get their sex education from their parents. (Richard and Allgeier, 1988). In a sense, then, it is the ultimate goal of children

and young adults to receive their sex education from their parents.

What is the ultimate goal of parents? According to the results of a survey conducted by Koblinsky and Atkinson, most parents expected to discuss a variety of sexual issues with their children. Mothers were asked which of fifteen issues they expected to discuss with their daughters and which issues they expected to discuss with their sons. The same responses were collected from fathers who participated in the survey. The following table reflects the results of the Koblinsky-Atkinson study:

Table 1

Percentage of Parents Who Expect to Discuss Each Sexual Topic  
Koblinsky-Atkinson, 1982

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Fathers</u>	<u>Fathers</u>
	<u>of Sons</u>	<u>of Daughters</u>	<u>of Sons</u>	<u>of Daughters</u>
Birth	86	91	72	82
Body	86	87	72	79
Differences				
Reproduction	83	87	64	82
Sexual Morals	93	87	61	73
Venereal	83	85	69	73
Disease				
Contraception	83		69	73
Obscene Words	74	78	64	85
Sexual	77	81	69	73
Intercourse				
Petting	74	76	69	73
Rape/	71	85	64	73
Sexual Offenses				
Abortion	77	70	55	68
Menstruation	80	91	33	56
Homosexuality	74	68	53	65
Masturbation	63	59	33	73
Wet Dreams	51	38	28	73



Now that we have looked at the expectations of parents and children in regards to sex education in the home, it would be interesting to look at the opinions of other researchers as to what is actually being discussed between parents and children. As is usually expected in this large a review of literature, the opinions of researchers vary, and often times, the results of some of the studies are contradictory with others.

According to Goldman and Goldman, 1982, "Parents were the primary source of sexual information in the United States" (Katchadourian, 1989). Walters and Walters, 1983, contend that "Research continues to indicate that parents are not providing adequate sources of education for most young people." (Kelly, 1988) Much lies in the careful interpretation of the above statements. At first it may appear as if these statements are contradictory; that is, one source believes parents to be the primary source of sexual information, while the second source does not appear to agree. However, Walters and Walters are not commenting on whether or not parents are a primary source of sex education for their children. Rather, it is a comment on the adequacy of the coverage of sexual issues within discussions between parents and children.

The following charts are the compiled results of various studies concerning the sources of information for children and young adults. The first chart, Table B, is a compilation of results from studies completed by Anthansion, Hunt, Kinsey,

and Schofield. In addition, the percentage results are computed for both males and females to more specifically determine where males and females seek information regarding sex.

Table 2

## Sources of Information Concerning Sex

	<u>Anthansion(1970)</u>		<u>Hunt(1974)</u>		<u>Kinsey(1950)</u>		<u>Schofield(1973)</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
Peers	64	51	59	46	61	39	74	81
Parents	8	17	9	17	5	14	18	31
School	3	3	3	5	1	5	5	8
Books	23	23	20	22	-	-	26	20
Mixed	2	6	9	10	33	42	-	-

Table C reflects the findings of Goldman and Goldman from their 1982 study concerning the sources of sexual information for children and young adults in North America. Interestingly, the Goldmans' study breaks down the category of "Parents" into "Mothers" and "Fathers", and "Both Parents". The use of this technique helps to better distinguish which parent (or both parents) is most often utilized as a source of sexual information for their children.

Table 3

<u>Sources of Information</u>	<u>North America</u>	
Parents		
Mothers	32	
Fathers	2	
Both Parents	9	
Teachers/School Lessons	19	
Media	18	
Friends	8	Ronald and Juliette
Siblings	5	Goldman, Children's
Street/Playground	6	Sexual Thinking.
Medical People	1	London: Rutledge, 1982

Both Kinsey and Gebhard have conducted studies which look at the sources of sexual information for children and young adults. What is unique about their studies is that Kinsey and Gebhard categorized their data according to specific sexual topics. In addition, the data is also categorically divided by male and female. Surprisingly though, fathers are not listed as an option as a source of sexual information. This factor may detract from the validity of the studies as it is expected that fathers do provide sexual information to their children. It appears as if Kinsey and Gebhard based their studies on the assumption that sex education is the responsibility of the mother. As Peter Kilmann records in his book, Human Sexuality in Contemporary Life, "Sex education is

seen as more the mother's responsibility by many parents." On the other hand, these Kinsey and Gebhard studies do show an excellent breakdown of sources outside of the home.

Table 4

## Sources of Sexual Information for Young Adults by Topic Areas

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
		<u>Kinsey</u>	<u>Gebhard</u>	<u>Kinsey</u>	<u>Gebhard</u>
Coitus	Same-Sex Peer	73.3	50	49.1	48
	Mother	3.1	9	17.7	15
	Mass Media	3.9	12	9.8	5
Fertilization					
	Same-Sex Peer	17.8	0	11.5	3
	Mother	4.4	13	14.6	14
	Mass Media	24.1	23	19.9	14
	School/ Formal Training	39.5	45	43.4	22
Pregnancy	Same-Sex Peer	52.7	3	33.5	44
	Mother	14.2	53	35.7	6
Menstruation					
	Same-Sex Peer	51.5	27	18.7	70
	Mother	9.3	16	46.6	17
	Experience	.4	4	19.2	36
	Mass Media	13.8	14	2.6	8
	School/ Formal Training	5.9	16	.5	6
Abortion	Same-Sex Peer	No	8	36.1	9
	Mother		20	17.7	17
	Mass Media	Data	31	19.2	11
	School/ Formal Training		8	9.0	13
Condoms	Same-Sex Peer	89.7	67	66.8	51
	School/ Formal Training	1.5	5	6.8	16

Later research, such as that conducted by Roberts, 1980, have followed the trend of interviewing both mothers and fathers. In addition, Roberts includes the practice of disseminating sexual information into topic areas for both boys and girls. Roberts conducted one such study in the Cleveland area, where he interviewed families of 3- to 11-year-old children.

According to Roberts' findings, the study "showed that the vast majority of children received little or no direct information or advice from their parents. Fathers particularly were uninvolved in the sexual education of their children; both boys and girls directed their questions to the mothers (pregnancy and birth being the most talked about topics). When parents responded to questions about sexuality, they usually dealt with them as one-time issues rather than as part of an on-going dialogue." (Roberts et al, 1978; Roberts, 1980)

The conclusion of the Roberts' study reveals that, at least in this particular study, parents discuss little or no sexual information to their children. In Human Sexuality, Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny (1988) make reference to this phenomena: "Sex education, beyond the most rudimentary 'birds and bees' facts of anatomy and reproduction, is often ignored by parents and schools alike until a child reaches adolescence".

When parents are not prepared or willing to speak with their children about sexual matters, they may feel trapped

when their child asks for some sexual information. In some such cases, parents may resort to the technique of information control. Sears et al have identified three types of information control.

"Parents exercise three types of information control concerning sexual matters. First, through unambiguous labeling, parents point out and label certain behaviors as wrong but give no explanation why. A child may be simply told 'that's not nice' or 'good girls do not do that'."

Second, through nonlabeling, parents avoid sexual issues by distracting the child or by shifting the focus of conversation to a less sensitive area. A girl who asks how her mother got pregnant may be told that 'mommy and daddy were in love', leaving the child no wiser.

Third, through mislabeling, a sexual activity is condemned not for what it is, but for some spurious reason; a boy may be told not to play with his penis so as not to get 'germs' (Sears et al., 1957). Parents may also avoid labeling sex altogether or refer to genitals and sexual acts in ambiguous terms. These maneuvers all prevent understanding and compound ignorance with shame and anxiety." (Katchadourian, 1989)

Throughout the various studies that have been explored in the review of literature, one finding is consistent. These studies indicate that parents do not often serve as a primary source of sexual information for children or young adults. "American teenagers, for example, report that they learned

most of what they know about sex from their friends, not their parents" (Gebhard, 1977; Kirby, Alter, and Scales, 1979; Kallen Stephenson, and Doughty, 1983).

A second alternative is described by Parsons (1983) and Goldman and Goldman (1982). They have reported that "in the absence of information about sex and reproduction, children will attempt to devise their own explanations". (Richard and Rice, 1988)

Additional findings on the specific roles that mothers and fathers play in disseminating sexual information to their children reveal that there are two major areas in which mothers and fathers differ in regard to sharing information with their children. The first area concerns the amount of information shared between mothers and their children and between fathers and their children. The second area involves the specific topic areas which mothers and fathers are most likely to discuss.

For the first area, Gagnon and Roberts (1983) found that "all investigators studying parental involvement in sex education report that mothers are much more likely than fathers to discuss sexual issues, although mothers will usually discuss only relatively impersonal topics." (Gagnon and Roberts, 1983). In addition, Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1988) report that "relatively few American fathers play active role in providing their children with age-appropriate sex information".



Little information was found regarding any distinctions made between what specific sexual topics mothers are most likely to discuss from those which fathers are more likely to discuss with their children. However, Peter Kilmann, does make a distinction about some topics that fathers are less likely to discuss. In consideration of various sexual topics, Kilmann (1984) reflects, "the topics of menstruation and wet dreams are rarely discussed, especially by the father".

As one learns in reading Pragmatics of Human Communication, Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson (1967), individuals cannot not communicate. Nonverbal messages are always present, even when an individual is not concurrently giving verbal messages. In fact, when an individual chooses not to engage in conversation with another, they are still communicating a message to that other person. It follows, then, that "all parents cannot help communicating their own sexual attitudes and values" (Katchadourian, 1989).

How do children interpret the nonverbal messages that their parents send when asked about sexual information? It depends on the nonverbal actions of the parent. A smile or a gesture indicating that the child should sit down with the parent are signs that communication about sexual issues is welcomed and encouraged. However, there are other nonverbal gestures a parent may display when confronted with a sexual topic. Lack of eye contact between parent and child can be an indication that the parent is uncomfortable with the issue, or even that the parent is unwilling to share information on sexual issues with the child or young adult.

According to Kahn and Kline, 1980, "When a parent reacts to a sexual question or situation by blushing, fidgeting, or freezing up, the child will pick up the negative message no matter what the parent answers" (Katchadourian, 1989).

For those individuals who subscribe to organized religion, their religious teachings may influence their attitudes about human sexuality. Religion in the church offers human beings guidelines on how to conduct themselves as sexual beings. Parents, as members of a church, are responsible for seeing that their children understand the church teachings on sexuality. Together then, it is the churches and the parents who will influence, to a great extent, how children and young adults will perceive themselves and their role as sexual beings in society. Although, it is the individuals who subscribe to any organized religion who will ultimately make the distinction for themselves what role human sexuality will play in their lives.

There are "two major ways in which individuals and societies approach questions of values: through religious beliefs and ethical analysis" (Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny, 1988). This second part of the review of literature is designed to give the reader a brief background into the role of the church, if any, in determining the extent of sexual information provided in the home. In addition, a brief overview of the churches stand on sexual ethics will be discussed. The review of literature will focus on three church divisions: Protestant, Catholic and Jewish.

In a study by Smith (1978), which was cited in Sex Education: Theory and Practice, the view of the church regarding sex education was discussed. The conclusion of the study was that "Churches are recognizing that sexuality is an essential aspect of humanity, and that sex education is a shared responsibility."

The literature addresses the fact that churches, in the past, possessed negative attitudes toward the topic of human sexuality. This negative atmosphere, conclusively, could affect which, if any, sexual issues are discussed in the home.

Secondly, it appears reasonable that the manner in which sexual information is presented to children could be influenced by the way in which the church regards human sexuality. This conclusion is supported in the following quote from Sex Education--The Schools and the Churches: "Growing out of negativistic attitudes toward sex, there came a refusal to speak of sexual matters--except by way of euphemism and moralism."

The role of human sexuality has changed over the years in the Jewish tradition. According to Haeberle, 1978, "The Judaic-Christian tradition viewed sex as a primarily reproductive function. For the early Hebrews, the function of sex was to propagate the family lineage and the Hebrew people" (Holland, 1981).

With changing times, come changes of opinion and perspective. Jewish tradition of today teaches that "The joy of sexual activity is a good in itself, distinct form

procreation" (Gordis, 1978). Such changes in perspectives and attitudes are a result of the need for religious teachings to be applicable to modern society. "If the values and insights to be found in the traditional approach to love, sex, and marriage are to win the allegiance of modern men and women, especially the young, they need to be understood, interpreted, and applied with due regard to the complexities of a new world." (Gordis, 1978)

Overall, the Jewish tradition "generally takes the view that sex is good" (Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny, 1988). On the other hand, Judaism has taken strong stands on various sexual issues. These issues include sterilization, masturbation, menstruation, and premarital intercourse.

Two branches of Judaism will be mentioned within this section. First is Orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Judaism is viewed as the conservative branch of the Jewish faith. Orthodox Jews are guided by a belief system steeped in tradition and traditional teachings.

An example of the conservative view of Orthodox Judaism, is their teachings on the subject of menstruation. In general, menstruation is viewed as unclean. Specifically, "The sexual relationship is regulated in Orthodox Jewish law by being forbidden during menstruation or for seven days afterward, and following this the wife takes a ritual bath in a pool of running water" (Benson, 1960).

In general, Reform Judaism is viewed as the liberal branch of the Jewish faith. According to Masters, Johnson,

and Kolodny (1988), "Reform Judaism generally takes a liberal stance on matters such as abortion, masturbation, and premarital sex".

Although the Jewish tradition views sex as generally good, individual sexual issues are dealt with by themselves. The following paragraphs briefly summarize the stand of the Jewish faith on various sexual topics.

According to "Talmudic law, a woman is permitted to sterilize herself permanently" (Gordis, 1978). In addition, the act of masturbation is permitted within the Jewish religion. According to Gordis (1978), "Judaism never evinced the morbid preoccupation with masturbation that has characterized some Christian religious circles virtually to our day".

Primarily, Judaism teaches abstinence from intercourse, except when engaged in within the context of marriage. Therefore, all outside sexual relations, such as adultery, are strictly forbidden. "Jewish attitudes toward sex takes, as its point of departure, the fundamental principle that marriage and marriage alone is the proper framework for sexual experience" (Gordis, 1978).

Like adultery, premarital intercourse is strongly discouraged by Jewish tradition. "Judaism maintains the principle that sexual relations are proper only within the marriage bond. In cases where marriage is not contemplated, non-marital relations are vigorously opposed (Gordis, 1978).

Some individuals in our society may question whether it makes a difference if the couple who engages in premarital intercourse is or is not engaged. Within the Jewish tradition, "intimate relations between engaged couples are prohibited" (Gordis, 1978). Interestingly, though, while "premarital intercourse is strongly discouraged, a child born out of wedlock is not regarded as illegitimate" (Rosenheim, 1977).

Concerning contraception, "Jewish law approaches the issue of birth control from the standpoint of the individuals involved. Family planning is often a necessity of modern life, in view of complex moral, hygienic, and economic factors" (Gordis, 1978).

While contraception "has been recognized by Conservative and Reform rabbis to be appropriate in the marriage relationship" (Benson, 1960), contraception is not to be used in a haphazard manner. "Birth control should be used sparingly and only when warranted by conditions." (Gordis, 1978)

Abortion is permitted within Judaism. This, though, is an instance where Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism clash. Just as individuals will not distinctively agree on all sexual issues, here too do the individual branches of Judaism.

The second religious affiliation to be discussed is that of Catholicism. In regards to Judaism, Catholicism shares some of the same stands on various sexual issues, but Catholics are taught to take some alternative perspectives on

other sexual issues. "The approaches of Christianity and Judaism to sex and morals prove on examination to be quite different, and, in some respects, diametrically opposed to each other." (Gordis, 1978)

"Within the Roman Catholic Church today sexual questions and ethics have become one of the most vital areas of debate and concern." (Curran, 1988) One such area of debate surrounds the issue of sex education, and more precisely, where such sex education should be implemented.

A large body of literature addressed the need for sex education within the home. "The understanding of how to give and receive affection, which has been passed on through sexuality education in the family, is closely linked to our cultural and religious appreciation of the body, which, in turn, affects our bodily self-image. We who are parents and educators need to die to 'life according to the flesh' by acknowledged as a necessity in a survey of the sacred Congregation for the Clergy, the religious, and for Catholic education (April, 1973) must extend beyond that called for in the home and permeate all areas of educational development." (Kosnik, 1977).

Roman Catholics base their teachings on the subject of premarital intercourse from the New Testament. Like the Jewish tradition, premarital intercourse, even between engaged couples, is prohibited. Members of the Roman Catholic Church refer to the *Humanae Vitae* when addressing the churches stand on issues dealing with the subject of human sexuality. The

Humanae Vitae is a statement on sexual ethics written by the leader of the Catholic Church, the Pope. Where the Humanae Vitae (1975) addresses the issue of premarital sexual relations, it states: "Sexuality is a source of great joy, but marriage is the only legitimate context for sexual experience that is honorable and good".

In the Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics, published in 1975, premarital sexual relations were addressed. This declaration "condemned 'sexual union before marriage' even where there was 'a firm intention to marry and an affection which is in some way conjugal', because traditional moral doctrine stated that 'every genital act must be within the framework of marriage'." (Parrinder, 1980) While individual Catholics may choose to engage in premarital intercourse, it still holds that Catholics are to reject sexual relationships not held within the context of marriage, in reference to official church doctrine.

The reasons given by the church for the strict rejection of premarital sexual relations are quite diversified, yet thorough. The most commonly heard reason for justifying the concept sexual relations only within the context of marriage is that "there is a need to justify sexual relations between a man and a woman in the eyes of God the Creator." (Pope John Paul II, 1981)

The Catholic church views premarital intercourse as a means of objectifying people for sexual gratification. According to Pope John Paul II (1981), "Sexual relationships



outside marriage automatically put one person in the position of an object to be used by another. A 'marital' sexual relationship outside the framework of marriage is always objectively a wrong done to the woman. Always - even when the woman consents to it, and indeed even when she herself actively desires and seeks it" (Pope John Paul II, 1981).

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, subdue it and have dominion over it" (Genesis 1:28). So began the Catholic policy of no means of artificial contraception. As Benson (1960) notes: "The family function of producing offspring is one which is strongly encouraged by some religious groups, such as Catholics, because of the belief that bringing children into the world to become part of the divine kingdom is regarded as a religious responsibility".

According to the teachings of the Catholic church, all couples must be open to the possibility of conception when choosing to engage in sexual intercourse. The message against the use of artificial means of contraception is straightforward. As the Papal Encyclical on Marriage states: "Since the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose, sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious". Therefore, artificial means of contraception are prohibited because they interfere with the natural rhythm of the process of conception.

Sex educators speak of a two-fold purpose for sexual relations: recreation and procreation. The use of sex for recreation refers to a couple engaging in sexual intercourse for the purpose of sexual release and/or as an expression of love between two persons. With recreational sex, the couple need not be open to the concept of procreation. The Roman Catholic church only approves of sexual intercourse that is necessarily open to the idea of producing offspring. Pope John Paul II writes in Love and Responsibility,:

"When we write about morality in sexual relations and in marriage we always stress that it depends on conscious and willing acceptance by the man and the woman of the possibility of parenthood, without which a marital relationship between persons not afflicted with congenital or acquired infertility will lose the value of a union in love and become merely a bilateral arrangement for sexual enjoyment."

Prior to 1930, Catholics were not allowed to use any means of contraception. However, in 1930, Rome approved one means of contraception for Catholic couples. This means was the method of fertility awareness, or more commonly known as the rhythm method. It is at this time that all means of artificial contraception became the methods prohibited. The rhythm method was approved because the church felt that couples who used this procedure were "merely adapting themselves to the laws of nature. The fertility cycle is part of that order" (Pope John Paul II, 1981). Interestingly, though, "Catholics are warned against abusing this procedure"

(Benson, 1960). Periodic continence is the recommended standard for the use of the method of fertility awareness. Catholics are warned not to regard the method of fertility awareness as a continual means to avoid conception altogether. As stated by Pope John Paul II (1981):

"We cannot speak of continence as a virtue where the spouses take advantage of the periods of biological infertility exclusively for the purpose of avoiding parenthood altogether, and have intercourse only in those periods."

Directly following this line of thought is the prohibition of sterilization, by means of a vasectomy or a tubal ligation. This, of course, in direct relation to the mandate that all sexual activity must be open to the idea of conception.

Artificial insemination is also strongly discouraged by the Catholic church. The reasoning for this prohibition lies in the term 'artificial'. However, the Catholic church has been open to discussion about the use of the husband's sperm as a possible exception to the prohibited use of artificial insemination. "The discussion of the last decade on artificial insemination by the husband's sperm indicates an increasing openness to its acceptability." (Kosnik, 1977)

The Roman Catholic church also prohibits execution of the following sexual acts: extramarital sex, masturbation, and homosexual acts. The basis for the exclusion of these acts is that they are both morally unacceptable and do not adhere to the 'natural philosophy' regarding sexual intercourse.

However, it has been shown that "the majority of Catholic believers disagree with the official hierarchical teaching on such issues as the absolute condemnation of masturbation, contraception, sterilization and divorce. For example, a Princeton University study showed that 76.5 percent of American Catholic married women of child-bearing age used some form of contraception, and 94 percent of them used a means condemned by the Pope." (Curran, 1988)

One of the reasons given for Catholic believers to stray from the word of their leader, the Pope, is that they feel that such rules and regulations are being mandated by individuals who have chosen a celibate lifestyle and have little understanding of the structure and demands of a non-celibate lifestyle. "In the case of those who feel that they are concerned about the encyclical, it seems that many of them have made a distinction between what they regard to be the essential part of their faith and what they regard to be a proposed line of moral conduct suggested by the celibate members of the church." (Bockle and Pohier, 1976) As in the case of many organized religions, it is the individual who ultimately makes the distinction between what is professed as proper by the church, and how that individual chooses to conduct his or her life.

The final organized religion which will be discussed in this thesis, is Protestantism. There are numerous denominations that fall under the category of Protestant. For

example, Methodists, Lutherans, Unitarians, and Baptists are all a part of the larger unit known as Protestantism.

In addition to the various denominations within Protestantism, Protestants may refer to themselves as either Evangelical Protestants or Moderate Protestants. Evangelical Protestantism is the orthodox branch of Protestantism. Individuals who adhere to this branch are considered more conservative in both their interpretation of church teachings and in their outlook toward issues of sexuality. Moderate Protestants tend to be more liberal in their outlook toward issues of sexuality and sexual responsibility.

To better make the distinction between Evangelical Protestants and Moderate Protestants more clear, a brief outlook on each group's stand on some sexual issues will now be made. Evangelical Protestants are in "opposition to abortion, rejection of premarital sex, skepticism about contraceptives, very negative judgements about divorce, and condemnation of homosexual behavior". Moderate Protestants, on the other hand, are "no longer willing to condemn premarital sex outright, regard contraception as a social and individual good; divorce is often a lesser evil to a tormented marriage, and are more tolerant of homosexuality" (Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny, 1988).

As with the differential branches of Judaism, so the differential denominations of Protestantism make individual distinctions about the teachings and ethics of various issues dealing with human sexuality. For the most part, the

researcher's synopsis of these issues will be representative of the Protestant tradition as a whole, unless otherwise indicated.

The concept of sex education programs for youth have been encouraged by Protestant groups as a means of expressing the teachings of the church to children and adolescents. Much like the youth in American society as a whole, Protestant adolescents do not always view their parents as a viable source of information regarding sexual issues.

According to Letha Scanzzoni, she found that "in speaking to Protestant youth groups, I have heard adolescents frequently say that they wish adults wouldn't treat sex secretly or as something dirty or taboo. Children would like to talk with their parents about the questions on their minds, but don't feel they can" (Holland, 1981). In response to this issue Unitarians and the United Methodists, among other denominations have begun sex education programs for young people.

As in the Jewish tradition, Protestants are heeding to the needs to remain flexible in their teachings on sexual ethics in order to better be able to respond to the needs of a contemporary and ever-changing world. However, the Protestant tradition is not willing to compromise its ideals in the process.

In contrast to other organized religions such as Judaism and Catholicism, the Protestant tradition does not view the process of menstruation as 'unclean'. Karen Paige (1976)

conducted a research study with 52 women who were using a pill that minimized hormonal fluctuations. "Catholic and Jewish women in the study, whose religions tend to view the menstruating women as 'unclean', showed more premenstrual anxiety than did Protestant women." (Hall and Rosen, 1984)

As a rule, Protestants are in agreement with Catholics and Jewish believers in regards to the issues of premarital intercourse and adultery. Premarital intercourse and adultery are strongly discouraged acts. However, some researchers, such as Benson, believe there is a growing acceptance of premarital intercourse under certain conditions. As Benson (1960) states, "There appears to be an increasing tacit acceptance, although still a decidedly minority one, among those speaking from the tradition of Protestantism, of the ethical appropriateness of coitus before marriage, especially when engaged in by those who expect to marry and whose family or economic circumstances make postponement necessary".

Protestants view sexual activity as a positive act, and a good in itself. The ideal circumstance for sexual activity is within the confines of a marital relationship. "Sexual expression is generally regarded as natural and desirable within the situation of a stable marriage." (Benson, 1960) In addition, there is no distinction made between intercourse as a means of procreation or sexual intercourse as a means of recreation.

The Protestant stand on the issue of contraception is best summarized by the following statement adopted by the

Committee on Marriage and the Home of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (1931):

"A majority of the committee holds that the careful and restrained use of contraceptives by married people is valid and moral. They take this position because they believe that it is important to provide for the proper spacing of children, the control of the size of the family, and the protection of mothers and children; and because intercourse between the mates, when an expression of their spiritual union and affection, is right in itself. They are of the opinion that abstinence within marriage, except for the few, cannot be relied upon to meet these problems, and under ordinary conditions is not desirable in itself."

More recent statements by the Department of Family Life of the National Council of Churches and by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches fortify and expand this view." (Benson, 1960)

In sharp contrast to the teachings of the Catholic church, Protestant believers have not been denied the freedom to use any means of contraception, whether artificial or natural. "In practice, Protestant couples have freely used contraceptives without feeling at any time that they were betraying their Christian or human vocation." (Fuchs, 1983) In addition, the Protestants were among the organized religions who did not offer any opposition to the Planned Parenthood Movement.



## METHODOLOGY

Upon reflection of the content of the review of literature, the researcher decided to focus upon whether the perceived amount of sex education information transmitted to students by their parents was related to the religious affiliation of the family. The following is a list of objectives for this particular study:

### Objectives

1. To determine the amount of sex education discussed or presented by parents of various religious affiliations for their children.
2. To determine the differential emphasis placed on major sexual topics by parents in their discussion of sex education with their children.
3. To determine if it was the students' mother, father, or both who presented any meaningful sex education in the home.
4. To determine a measure of the students' satisfaction with the sex education they received in the home.
5. To determine to what extent students perceived that their religious affiliation had contributed to their attitudes about human sexuality.

### Hypothesis

The null hypothesis of this study is that there is no relationship between the religion of the student's family and the amount of sex education received in the home.

### Sample

The sample for this study was composed of 189 Michigan State University students. These students were Juniors and Seniors who were enrolled for Family and Child Ecology 445, Human Sexuality and the Family, for Winter Term, 1990. This is a post-hoc study utilizing recall of university students who have been away from home for at least two years.

As a Graduate Teaching Assistant for one section of FCE 445, I was able to administer the instrument myself. During a session of FCE 445, students were requested to fill out the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. A brief explanation of how to complete each section was discussed. Questionnaires were handed out to students in unsealed envelopes with the instruction to hand back the completed questionnaires in that same envelope. The envelopes were used as an added measure of assuring anonymity. In addition to my verbal instructions, each questionnaire included a cover letter (See Appendix A).

### Instrument

The measurement of sex education in the family was assessed through the self-reports of the students. A questionnaire (See Appendix B) was used which listed ten sex education topics, and the students responded as to whether those topics were discussed between the student and the parents. The questionnaire followed a Likert scale format. Sex education topics were individually listed above five-point scales. The scales contained the following items on a continuum from top to bottom: Never Mentioned; Indirectly Referred To; Mentioned; Discussed Briefly; and Discussed at Length.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section I was developed to assess each individual's demographics. Included in this section were questions regarding the individual's sex, religious affiliation, and level of participation in a religious affiliation.

Section II was the part of the questionnaire where individuals completed the Likert scales that were described in the above paragraph. Students were asked to assess the amount that each sexual topic was discussed by both their mother and their father. The selection of sexual topics were determined by reviewing the contents of various human sexuality textbooks. An emphasis on personal (anatomy, sexual intercourse) were selected as a focus of this study. Social

issues (abortion, infertility) were not included as part of the study because it was believed that the inclusion of the topics would affect the validity of the study.

Section III of the instrument was designed to measure a global assessment of the amount that the students felt that their religious affiliation had contributed to their attitudes about human sexuality. In addition, students were asked to assess, overall, the amount they believed their religious education had contributed to the amount of sex education they had received in the home.

A pilot test of the instrument was conducted approximately six months prior to the actual administration of the instrument. The pilot instrument was administered to approximately 60 FCE 445 students. The pilot testing resulted in a revision of the original questionnaire, in conjunction with reviews from experts in the field. A replication of the study was not completed because of the preliminary nature of the study.

## RESULTS

The number of subjects for this study was 189. Within the sample, 25% of the respondents were male; 75% were female. The ratio of gender was nearly 3:1, females to males. The age of individuals in the sample ranged between 19 and 40. Ages of the sample largely grouped around the ages of 20-22. The average age of the sample was 22; the median and mode were both 21. This finding was expected because the vast majority of students enrolled in FCE 445, Human Sexuality and the Family, are traditional Juniors and Seniors.

The Primary Religious Educator for the majority of the subjects was their mothers (52%). 39% of the sample specified that mothers and fathers both contributed equally as religious that their fathers served as the Primary Religious Educator (4%). Five percent elected not to answer this question.

The majority (62%) received some form of sex education in high school, while 38% did not receive any such formal instruction. This measure did not include any sex information that may have been received previous to this time in a school system.

The sample was primarily made up of Catholics (47%) and Protestants (44%). Protestant denominations (Lutheran, Methodist, etc.) were not analyzed separately. There was a small population of Jewish students (2%) included in the sample. In fact, there was a higher percentage of students

who indicated that they did not ascribe to any organized religion (7%). This percentage is indicated under the selection "Other" because all individuals who selected this category wrote the word "None" on the line adjacent to "other".

The majority of respondents were "Moderately Involved" in their religion. "Highly Involved" participation in religion was selected by 26% of the surveyed sample. Nineteen percent responded that they had "No Involvement" in religion. It is interesting to note that this percentage must include other subjects aside from those who indicated that they were not raised under any organized religion.

A survey of the "Mother's Religion" indicated that 47% were Catholic; 44% Protestant; 3% Jewish; and 3% No Religious Affiliation. The number of missing responses equaled 3%. It is interesting to note that the breakdown of "Mother's Religion" and the breakdown of "Student's Religion" carried different percentage rates, with the exception of the Catholic religion which remained at 47% for both categories.

A survey of the "Father's Religion" indicated that 47% were Catholic; 41% Protestant; 2% Jewish; and 5% No Religious Affiliation. The number of missing responses equaled 4%. It is interesting to note that the breakdown of "Father's Religion" and the breakdown on "Student's Religion" carried different percentage rates, with the exception of the Jewish Religion, which remained at 2% for both categories.

A statistical analysis of the research findings was completed for each religious affiliation (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and No Religious Affiliation). The following is a summary of the results of each of the variables broken down by religious affiliation.

### Catholic

The sexual topic most discussed by Catholic mothers was Female Sexual Anatomy. The sexual topic most discussed by Catholic fathers was Pre-Marital Sex. The topic of Wet Dreams was least discussed by both Catholic mothers and fathers.

The breakdown of gender for Catholic respondents was approximately 3:1, females to males (females 74%; males 26%). The majority 62% did receive sex education in high school; while the remainder 38% did not receive any sex education in high school.

"Mother's Religion" was predominantly Catholic (92%), with the remainder of the mothers (8%) Protestant. The majority of fathers were also Catholic (83%), with the remainder of the fathers either Protestant (14%), or having No Religious Affiliation.

The majority of Catholic students indicated that their mothers were the primary religious educators (62%). A large percentage of Catholic students (35%) responded that both parents served as their primary religious indicator. Only 2%

of Catholic students indicated that their father had been the primary religious educator.

The majority (62%) of Catholic students had indicated that they were "moderately involved" in their religion. Over a quarter of the respondents (29%) responded that they were "highly involved", and 9% indicated that they had "no involvement" in the Catholic religion.

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 11% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to Female sexual anatomy was made by 14% of these mothers; 16% "Mentioned" the subject; 31% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 28% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.46).

Female sexual anatomy "Never Mentioned" by 45% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to Female sexual anatomy was made by 23% of these fathers; 10% "Mentioned" the subject; 18% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 31% indicated "Discussed at Length". Fathers were far less likely to engage in a discussion about Female sexual anatomy than were the mothers surveyed. The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.08).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 24% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to male sexual anatomy made by 15% of these mothers; 20% "Mentioned" the subject; 27% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 14%



indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.91).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 43% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to Male sexual anatomy was made by 23% of these fathers; 11% "Mentioned" the subject; 20% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 2% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.15).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 16% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to Sexual intercourse was made by 9% of these mothers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 29% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.35).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 34% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to Sexual intercourse was made by 28% of these fathers; 14% "Mentioned" the subject; 19% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 5% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.32).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 12% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to menstruation was made by 13% of these mothers; 7% "Mentioned"

the subject; 26% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 42% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.74).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 60% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to menstruation was made by 15% of these fathers; 14% "Mentioned" the subject; 8% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 3% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.78).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 69% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 9% of these mothers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; 6% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 1% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.61).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 86% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 3% of these fathers; 8% "Mentioned" the subject; and 2% "Briefly Discussed" wet dreams. No fathers in this category indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.26).

Male puberty changes was "Never Mentioned" by 35% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 15% of these mothers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; 16% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 10% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for

mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.47).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 57% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 14% of these fathers; 18% "Mentioned" the subject; 9% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 2% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.84).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 23% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to female puberty changes was made by 16% of these mothers; 21% "Mentioned" the subject; 18% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 18% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.45).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 55% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to female puberty changes was made by 16% of these fathers; 13% "Mentioned" the subject; 12% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 5% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.94).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 13% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 10% of these mothers; 21% "Mentioned" the subject; 27% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 29%

indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.50).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 33% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 22% of these fathers; 18% "Mentioned" the subject; 15% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 12% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.44).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 26% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 16% of these mothers; 21% "Mentioned" the subject; 18% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 18% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.86).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 52% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 18% of these fathers; 12% "Mentioned" the subject; 14% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 3% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.94).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 43% of the mothers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 9% of these mothers; 17% "Mentioned" the subject; 20% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 10% indicated "Discussed At

Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.44).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 66% of the fathers of Catholic students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 8% of these fathers; 12% "Mentioned" the subject; 11% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 2% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.76).

### Jewish

The sexual topic most discussed by Jewish mothers was pre-marital sex. The sexual topics most discussed by Jewish fathers were male sexual anatomy, sexual intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pre-marital sex. The sexual topic least discussed by Jewish mothers was wet dreams. The least discussed topics for Jewish fathers were male puberty changes and wet dreams.

Half of the Jewish respondents were female, and 50% were male. The majority (75%) did not receive any sex education in high school; while the remainder (25%) did receive sex education in high school.

Mother's religion was 100% Jewish. The majority of fathers were also Jewish, with the remainder of the fathers Catholic.

Half of the Jewish students indicated that their mothers were the primary religious educators. Twenty-five percent of the Jewish students replied that their fathers had served as the primary religious educator; and 25% replied that both parents had served as the primary religious educator.

The majority (75%) of the Jewish students had indicated that they were "moderately involved" in their religion. The remainder of the Jewish students responded that they were "highly involved" in their religion.

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mother of Jewish students. Female sexual anatomy was "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.75).

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to female sexual anatomy was made by 25% of these fathers; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.75).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Male sexual anatomy was "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 50% Discussed the subject At Length. The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.75).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to male

sexual anatomy was made by 25% of these fathers; 25% "Mentioned" the subject; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.75).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Sexual intercourse was "Briefly Discussed" by 50% of these mothers; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.75).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexual intercourse was made by 25% of these fathers; 25% "Mentioned" the subject; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.75).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Menstruation was "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.75).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. Menstruation was "Briefly Discussed" by 50% of these mothers; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.50).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the mothers of Jewish students. Wet dreams were "Mentioned" by 25% of

these mothers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.50).

All of the fathers of Jewish students "Never Mentioned" wet dreams. The mean score for fathers averaged "Never Mentioned" (1.00).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the mothers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 25% of these mothers; and 25% "Briefly Discussed" the subject. The mean score for mothers averaged "Indirect Reference" (2.00).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 50% of these fathers. The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.50).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Female puberty changes were "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.75).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to female puberty changes was made by 25% of these fathers; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.50).



An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Pre-marital sex was "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged "Discussed Briefly" (4.00).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 25% of these fathers; 25% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged "Mentioned" (3.00).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the mothers of Jewish students. Contraceptives were "Mentioned" by 25% of these mothers; 25% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.25).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. Contraceptives were "Mentioned" by 25% of these fathers; and 50% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged "Mentioned" (3.00).

An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 50% of the mothers of Jewish students. Sexually transmitted diseases were "Briefly Discussed" by 25% of these mothers; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean

score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.25).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 25% of the fathers of Jewish students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 50% of these fathers; and 25% "Mentioned" the subject. The mean score for fathers averaged "Indirect Reference" (2.00).

### Protestant

The sexual topic most discussed by Protestant mothers was female sexual anatomy. The sexual topic most discussed by Protestant fathers was pre-marital sex. The sexual topic least discussed by both Protestant mothers and fathers was wet dreams.

The breakdown of gender for Protestant respondents was approximately 3:1, females to males (females 76%; males 24%). The majority (64%) did receive sex education in high school; while the remainder (36%) did not receive any sex education in high school.

Mother's religion was predominantly Protestant (85%), with the remainder of the mothers either Catholic (14%) or Jewish (1%). The majority of fathers were also Protestant (97%), with the remainder of the fathers (3%) Catholic.

Half of the Protestant student indicated that their mothers were the primary religious educators. Only 10% of

these students indicated that their fathers had served as the primary religious educator. The remainder of the students (40%) indicated that both parents had served as the primary religious educator.

The majority (52%) of Protestant students had indicated that they were "moderately involved" in their religion. Twenty-two percent indicated that they were "highly involved" in their religion; and the remainder (22%) indicated that they had "no involvement" in their religion.

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 11% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to female sexual anatomy was made by 19% of these mothers; 16% "Mentioned" the subject; 27% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 27% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.43).

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 55% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to female sexual anatomy was made by 18% of these fathers; 12% "Mentioned" the subject; 10% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 5% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.83).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 37% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to male sexual anatomy was made by 14% of these mothers; 18% "Mentioned" the subject; 20% "Briefly Discussed" the subject;

and 11% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.61).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 58% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to male sexual anatomy was made by 11% of these fathers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; 10% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 6% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.94).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 21% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexual intercourse was made by 15% of these fathers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; 27% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 20% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.08).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 50% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexual intercourse was made by 13% of these fathers; 12% "Mentioned" the subject; 16% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 9% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.16).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 14% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to menstruation was made by 7% of these mothers; 12% "Mentioned"

the subject; 30% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 37% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.72).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 65% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to menstruation was made by 13% of these fathers; 13% "Mentioned" the subject; and 10% "Briefly Discussed" menstruation. The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.70).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 76% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 11% of these mothers; 5% "Mentioned" the subject; 6% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 2% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.46).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 86% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 5% of these fathers; 1% "Mentioned" the subject; 6% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 1% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.32).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 47% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 10% of these mothers; 22% "Mentioned" the subject; 9% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 12% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for

mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.30).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 56% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 10% of these fathers; 19% "Mentioned" the subject; 8% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 6% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.89).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 18% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to female puberty changes was made by 8% of these mothers; 18% "Mentioned" the subject; 28% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 28% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.53).

Female puberty changes are "Never Mentioned" by 56% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to female puberty changes was made by 11% of these fathers; 21% "Mentioned" the subject; 9% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 4% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.90).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 13% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 16% of these mothers; 24% "Mentioned" the subject; 21% "Briefly Discussed" the subject;

and 26% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.37).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 40% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 11% of these fathers; 20% "Mentioned" the subject; 12% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 16% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.58).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 32% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 11% of these mothers; 14% "Mentioned" the subject; 18% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 25% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.94).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 60% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 8% of these fathers; 10% "Mentioned" the subject; 11% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 11% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.09).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 43% of the mothers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 10%

of these mothers; 16% "Mentioned" the subject; 14% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 17% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.52).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 65% of the fathers of Protestant students. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 6% of these fathers; 11% "Mentioned" the subject; 10% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.89).

#### No Religious Affiliation

Female puberty changes, female sexual anatomy, and sexual intercourse were the topics most discussed by mothers with No Religious Affiliation. The sexual topic most discussed by fathers with No Religious Affiliation was pre-marital sex. The sexual topic least discussed by both mothers and fathers with No Religious Affiliation was wet dreams.

The majority (85%) of the students with No Religious Affiliation were female. The remainder of students were male (15%). The majority of students with No Religious Affiliation (69%) had received sex education in high school; while the remainder (31%) did not receive any sex education in high school.



Mother's religion was varied. Thirty-eight percent of the mothers had No Religious Affiliation; 38% were Protestant; and 23% were Catholic. Father's religion was equally varied. Thirty-eight percent of these fathers were Protestant; 38% Catholic; 23% No Religious Affiliation; and the remainder of the fathers (8%) were Jewish.

The majority of students with No Religious Affiliation indicated that both parents had equal involvement as the primary religious educator. Mothers were the primary religious educator for 23% of these students; and 15% indicated that their fathers served as the primary religious educator.

The vast majority (77%) of students indicated that they had "no involvement" in their religion. The remainder of the students indicated that they were "highly involved" in their religion.

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 8% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to female sexual anatomy was made by 8% of these mothers; 8% "Mentioned" the subject; 46% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 31% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.71).

Female sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 38% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Female sexual anatomy was "Mentioned" by 23% of these fathers; and 38% "Briefly Discussed" the subject. The mean score for

fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.57).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 23% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Male sexual anatomy was "Mentioned" by 15% of these mothers; 46% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 15% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.21).

Male sexual anatomy was "Never Mentioned" by 38% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Male sexual anatomy was "Mentioned" by 31% of these fathers; 15% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 15% indicated "Discussed at Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.71).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 8% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to sexual intercourse was made by 15% of these mothers; 54% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 23% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.71).

Sexual intercourse was "Never Mentioned" by 23% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to sexual intercourse was made by 23% of these fathers; 31% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 23% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.07).

Menstruation was "Mentioned" by 23% of the mothers of students with No Religious affiliation. Menstruation was "Briefly Discussed" by 23% of these mothers; and 54% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Discussed Briefly" and "Discussed At Length" (4.29).

Menstruation was "Never Mentioned" by 46% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to menstruation was made by 8% of these fathers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; and 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject. The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.14).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 69% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 8% of these mothers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; and 8% "Briefly Discussed" the subject. The mean score for mothers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.57).

Wet dreams were "Never Mentioned" by 62% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to wet dreams was made by 15% of these fathers; 15% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Never Mentioned" and "Indirect Reference" (1.71).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 31% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 15% of these mothers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; 23% "Briefly

Discussed" the subject; and 15% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.79).

Male puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 46% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to male puberty changes was made by 8% of these fathers; 31% "Mentioned" the subject; and 15% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.38).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 8% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Female puberty changes were "Mentioned" by 15% of these mothers; 38% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 38% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.93).

Female puberty changes were "Never Mentioned" by 54% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Female puberty changes were "Mentioned" by 15% of these fathers; 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.21).

An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 17% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. Pre-marital sex was "Mentioned" by 25% of these mothers; 17% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 42% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.93).

Pre-marital sex was "Never Mentioned" by 15% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to pre-marital sex was made by 8% of these fathers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; 15% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 38% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.29).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 8% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 8% of these mothers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 39% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Mentioned" and "Discussed Briefly" (3.71).

Contraceptives were "Never Mentioned" by 46% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to contraceptives was made by 8% of these fathers; 8% "Mentioned" the subject; 31% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.36).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 23% of the mothers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 23% of these mothers; 23% "Mentioned" the subject; 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed

At Length". The mean score for mothers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.57).

Sexually transmitted diseases were "Never Mentioned" by 46% of the fathers of students with No Religious Affiliation. An "Indirect Reference" to sexually transmitted diseases was made by 8% of these fathers; 15% "Mentioned" the subject; 23% "Briefly Discussed" the subject; and 8% indicated "Discussed At Length". The mean score for fathers averaged between "Indirect Reference" and "Mentioned" (2.29).

## Analysis

The data from the instrument was analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). A Mann-Whitney-U-test and a Kruskal-Wallis 1-Way ANOVA were conducted to determine if a significant relationship exists between the sexual topics from Section II of the questionnaire (B variables) and Variable A3 - Religion.

The null hypothesis for this study is that there is no relationship between the amount of sex education received in the home and student's family's religious affiliation. A relationship between these variables would be recognized if a significance level of .05 or lower was found.

The Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted on the sexual topics from Section II of the questionnaire (B variables) by Variable A3 - Religion. In this test, only the Catholic and Protestant religions were analyzed because of the lower number of Jewish and No Religious Affiliation members in the sample. A relationship between these variables was believed to be significant if the score on the two-tailed P-test was .05 or lower. No "B" variables were found to be significant at the .05 level, indicating that it is not likely that there is a relationship between the level of discussion of sexual topics and religion.

The Kruskal-Wallis 1-Way ANOVA was conducted on the sexual topics from Section II of the questionnaire (B Variables) by Variable A3 - Religion. For this test, all

religious affiliations (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and No Religious Affiliation) were examined. A relationship between these variables was believed to be significant if the score on the chi-square test was .05 or lower. No "B" variables were found to be significant at the .05 level, indicating that it is not likely that there is a relationship between the level of discussion of sexual topics and a student's religious affiliation.

In consideration of the results of the SPSS analysis of data, it is concluded that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The study does not show a relationship between the level of discussion of sexual topics and a student's religious affiliation.



## DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this thesis was to determine whether the perceived amount of sex education information transmitted to students by their parents was related to the religious affiliation of the family. A total of 189 University Juniors and Seniors, who were enrolled in a Human Sexuality course, completed a survey which was designed to measure the amount of sex education received from their parents. Included in this sample were Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant students, as well as students with no religious affiliation. This questionnaire was designed to measure the students' perceptions of the amount of sex education discussed or presented by their parents.

For a sexual belief system to be conveyed from the religious affiliation to the parents, and finally, to the children, it must be assumed that the parents agree with the religious affiliation's stand on sexual issues and will convey those same beliefs to their children.

A limitation of the study is the small number of Jewish students who participated in the survey. Only 4 students out of the 189 surveyed, identified themselves as Jewish. This sample size limits the generalizability of these data from Jewish students to a Jewish college student population at large.

All of the students surveyed were currently enrolled in a Human Sexuality course. This situation may have affected

the generalizability of the findings of this study. This factor is dependant upon the reason for enrollment in a Human Sexuality course. Students may have enrolled in the course for several reasons, or even a combination of reasons. The possible reasons for enrollment could include a lack of sexual information from alternate sources, a desire to supplement their current sexual knowledge, a desire for personal enrichment and self-awareness, an interest in the subject matter, or an academic need of credits for graduation. If it were found that most students enrolled in the Human Sexuality course because they did not receive sexual information from other sources, the sample would be skewed and could not be generalized to all university students. However, the reasons for enrollment in the Human Sexuality course were not explored as part of this study.

Included as part of the Review of Literature is an examination of the sexual teachings of various religious affiliations. It was the belief of this researcher that a relationship would be evident between a religious organization's stand on sexual issues and the quantity of discussion its adherents supplied to their children.

### Jewish

The Jewish religion believes that "the joy of sexual activity is a good in itself, distinct from procreation" (Gordis, 1978). Half of the Jewish mothers discussed sexual

intercourse briefly with their children; the subject was Discussed at Length by 25% of these mothers; and 25% of the Jewish mothers Never Mentioned sexual intercourse. Jewish fathers were evenly split in discussing sexual intercourse. One-fourth of the fathers made an Indirect Reference to the subject; 25% Mentioned the subject; 25% Discussed it at Length; and 25% Never Mentioned sexual intercourse.

The Orthodox Jewish religion views menstruation as unclean. One-fourth of Jewish mothers and fathers Never Mentioned menstruation. However, 75% of Jewish mothers and fathers either "Discussed Briefly" menstruation with their children, or the subject was Discussed at Length.

Pre-Marital Sex is strongly discouraged in the Jewish faith. The Jewish religion teaches abstinence for unmarried individuals. All Jewish mothers discussed pre-marital sex with their children. The level of discussion ranged from Indirect Reference (25%) to Discussed at Length (50%). Three-fourths of Jewish fathers made at least an Indirect Reference to pre-marital sex with their children. The remainder of Jewish fathers (25%) Never Mentioned pre-marital sex.

The use of Contraceptives is warranted, dependent upon the standpoint of the individual involved. Family planning is considered a legitimate use of Contraceptives. Contraceptives were Never Mentioned by 25% of the Jewish mothers and fathers surveyed. The level of discussion for the

remainder of the Jewish parents ranged from Mentioned to Discussed at Length.

For the sexual topics that were viewed as positive or acceptable under the Jewish religion (Sexual Intercourse and Contraceptives), they were discussed by at least 75% of the Jewish parents surveyed. For the sexual topics that were viewed as negative or unacceptable (Menstruation and Pre-Marital Intercourse), not more than 25% of the Jewish mothers and fathers Never Mentioned these topics with their children.

It is interesting to note that, in the case of the Jewish students surveyed, the level of discussion from their parents remained virtually the same, regardless of whether the Jewish religion viewed the sexual topic as in a positive manner or in a negative manner. The reasons for the lack of distinction between those topics which were viewed in a positive manner and those viewed in a negative manner can be speculated upon, at best.

Orthodox Judaism and Reform Judaism view certain topics in a different manner. Menstruation and Pre-Marital Sex are seen as negative in Orthodox Judaism, but members of Reform Judaism are far less likely to view these topics in the same manner. In addition, not all members of the Jewish faith are in agreement with the doctrine of their faith for all sexual issues. Therefore, there are bound to be differences of opinion as to the treatment of a sexual issue.

A second possible explanation for the lack of distinction between those sexual issues viewed in a positive manner and

those viewed in a negative manner is that Jewish mothers and fathers are discussing issues viewed in a negative manner by the faith, and are simply conveying the message that their religion teaches about the sexual issue. Telling a child that a certain sexual issue, such as Pre-Marital Sex, is forbidden, would still be considered a discussion about Pre-Marital Sex between parent and child. In this circumstance a parent does not treat the sexual issue as "taboo", but sees it as his or her duty to convey the disapproval of the topic to the child.

### Catholic

Pre-Marital Sex is strictly forbidden in the Catholic Church. A mere 13% of the Catholic mothers Never Mentioned pre-marital sex, and 33% of the Catholic fathers Never Mentioned the subject to their children. More than 85% of the Catholic mother and more than 65% of the Catholic fathers did discuss pre-marital sex at some level.

The use of Contraceptives is also strictly forbidden within the Catholic Church. Natural Family Planning is the only approved method of birth control that is approved by the Catholic Church, and even then it is only to be used sparingly. Almost 75% of the Catholic mothers made some reference to pre-marital sex in discussions with their children. Less than half of the Catholic fathers made any reference to pre-marital sex.

The majority of Catholic mothers and fathers discussed pre-marital sex at some level. This finding indicates that

these parents were not inhibited by the Catholic Church's ruling that pre-marital sex is an activity strongly prohibited by the Church. It is a possibility that Catholic parents merely conveyed the message that Pre-Marital Sex was a forbidden act, and that this single message made up the entire body of the discussions between parent and child.

Catholic mothers were much more likely to discuss Contraceptives with their children than were Catholic fathers. Again, the consequences of the Catholic Church treating the subject of Contraceptives as "taboo" may have inhibited those Catholic parents, and in particular Catholic fathers, from selecting to discuss Contraceptives with their children.

A second possibility for the reason that Catholic fathers were far less likely than Catholic mothers to discuss Contraceptives, is that these fathers hold the belief that Contraceptives are a woman's issue and are best handled by mothers.

It can also be speculated that parents are influenced by multiple sources when deciding the amount of sexual information they wish to discuss with their children. Their religious affiliation may provide guidance for them or they may forsake the Church's teachings for their own sexual morals and guidelines. Church members are individuals, and as such cannot be expected to always accept all religious teachings on sexual matters for themselves and their families.

### Protestant

Protestants do not view Menstruation in a negative manner. It is seen as a natural and positive experience. Over 85% of the Protestant mothers discussed menstruation with their children. However, only 35% of Protestant fathers discussed the subject at some level. This discrepancy in level of discussions between Protestant mothers and fathers could exist for a number of reasons. One possibility is the belief that Menstruation is a topic to be discussed by women for women, since men do not have this physical experience. This would explain the finding that 18% of the Protestant mothers did not discuss menstruation because the majority of the male students in the Protestant sample (24%) may have indicated that their mothers Never Mentioned menstruation.

Pre-Marital Sex was a activity strongly discouraged by the Protestants. Over 85% of Protestant mothers discussed pre-marital sex, and 60% of Protestant fathers discussed this issue with their children. The level of discussion of pre-marital sex by Protestant parents negates the theory that a "taboo" subject would be less likely to be discussed in the home than a subject which is approved by the Protestant Church.

Sexual Intercourse is viewed as a positive act; a good in itself. Over 75% of Protestant mothers discussed pre-marital sex at some level, and half of the Protestant fathers discussed this issue with their children. It is possible that because the Protestant religion views Sexual Intercourse in

a positive light, most Protestant parents engaged in a discussion of the topic with their children.

The Protestants believe that the careful use of Contraceptives by married couples is valid and moral. The results of the study indicated that the majority of Protestant mothers (68%) discussed contraceptives at some level with their children. However, only 40% of Protestant fathers discussed this topic with their children. Once again the results of the data on contraceptives indicate a wide margin of discrepancy between the level of discussion of mothers and their children and fathers and their children. If these Protestant fathers believe that Contraceptives are a woman's issue, this would account for the majority of fathers who Never Mentioned contraceptives.

With one exception, mothers always discussed each sexual topic to a greater degree of discussion than the fathers in the sample. This finding was consistent for parents of all religious faiths, and for those with no religious affiliation. The one exception to this finding is that of fathers with No Religious Affiliation discussed wet dreams more frequently than mothers of No Religious Affiliation. The discrepancy between the levels of discussion of mothers and fathers appears to indicate that it is a value of society that it is the mothers' duty to be the primary sex educator for families.

A section on the most discussed and the least discussed sexual topics for each Religious Affiliation was included in the Results section of this thesis. There were some



consistencies in the most discussed and the least discussed sexual topics across religious affiliations.

Female sexual anatomy was the topic most often discussed by Catholic and Protestant mothers. There was a three-way tie for the most discussed sexual topic by mothers of No Religious Affiliation, and one of these was female sexual anatomy. The other two topics were female puberty changes and sexual intercourse. Jewish mothers most often discussed menstruation and pre-marital sex.

Pre-marital sex was the most often discussed topic for fathers in all religious categories. Jewish fathers did not have one predominant sexual topic that could be described as most often discussed. Male sexual anatomy, sexual intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases and pre-marital sex were all discussed by 75% of the fathers, the highest percentage for any sexual topic.

Wet dreams was, overwhelmingly, the topic with the least amount of discussion from both parents from all religious categories. Half of the Jewish fathers surveyed Never Mentioned wet dreams or male puberty changes, the highest percentage of any sexual topic for having been Never Mentioned. This finding is particularly interesting because it appears to indicate that the topic of wet dreams is an uncomfortable topic for all parents, despite their religious affiliations.

The overall findings of this study indicate that Religious Affiliation appears to have little or no bearing on

the amount of sex education received in the home. Whether or not a sexual topic was viewed as positive or negative within an individual's Church teachings did not appear to increase or decrease the amount of discussion about those topics. Subjects that were viewed as positive by the religious affiliation did not necessarily elicit discussion of the topic between parents and children. Subjects that were viewed as negative were not necessarily ignored as a topic for discussion. Church teachings and beliefs about sexuality did not significantly affect what parents in those religious groups teach their children about sexuality. The null hypotheses could not be rejected. The key finding of this study was that the religious affiliation's beliefs about sexuality are not taught by the parents to their children.

It has been speculated that a number of influences can determine the amount of sex education a parent will discuss with their children, only one of which is Religious Affiliation. One conclusion of this study is that every church member is an individual, and as such will make a final determination of the amount the teachings of his or her church will influence the amount of sex education received in the home.

It is not enough that churches convey their positions to the adult members of the church. Members of the church have a responsibility to understand the church's position and to convey that information to their children. The churches should emphasize the importance of parents conveying those

teachings to their children. Indeed, the churches hold an excellent opportunity to bridge the gap between addressing parents and addressing children.

The installation of a program of sex education for parents may help to encourage parents to discuss sexual issues with their children by easing their anxieties and providing ideas to parents for presenting this information to their children. In addition, the churches should build more effective sex education into their programs with youth. In this way, churches will have the opportunity to express their teachings about sexuality directly to the children.

## **APPENDIX A**

## RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE HOME

As a Graduate Assistant in FCE 445, Human Sexuality and the Family, I have noted the importance of religion as an influence in the amount of sex education received in the home. I would like to collect information on this topic through this questionnaire. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Your response is completely voluntary and anonymous. Participation or not participating will not affect your grade in this course. You may refuse to answer certain questions or to discontinue responding at any time without penalty. However, full completion of the questionnaire would be greatly appreciated. To keep this anonymous, please do not write your name on this sheet. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. If you have any questions or concerns that have been raised by participating in this study, please contact me at the following address:

407 Human Ecology  
353-3392

Thank you for your cooperation.

Kim Wallet

## **APPENDIX B**

RELIGION AND SEX EDUCATION

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

Sex: 1. Male  
2. Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

"Religion You Were Brought Up Under": 1. Catholic  
2. Jewish  
3. Protestant  
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Specify)

Family's Level of Participation in Religious Affiliation:

1. Highly Involved
2. Moderately Involved
3. No Involvement

Mother's Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Which Parent Was Primary Religious Educator:

1. Mother
2. Father
3. Equal Involvement

Did You Participate in a Sex Education Course in High School:

1. Yes
2. No

II. For the following sexual topics, please indicate the amount that the subject was discussed in the home. In Part A, under each topic heading, indicate the amount that the subject was discussed by your mother. Use Part B to indicate your father's degree of discussion. Be sure to circle your response for both Parts A and B under each subject heading.

FEMALE SEXUAL ANATOMY

A. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

MALE SEXUAL ANATOMYA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

SEXUAL INTERCOURSEA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

MeNSTRUATIONA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

WET DREAMSA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

MALE PHYSICAL CHANGES DURING PUBERTYA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length



FEMALE PHYSICAL CHANGES DURING PUBERTYA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

APPROPRIATE PRE-MARITAL SEXUAL BEHAVIORA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

CONTRACEPTIVESA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASESA. MOTHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

B. FATHER

1. Never Mentioned
2. Indirectly Referred To
3. Mentioned
4. Discussed Briefly
5. Discussed at Length

III. Amount Religious Education Contributed to Your Attitudes About Human Sexuality:

1. Contributed A Great Deal
2. Made A Moderate Contribution
3. No Contribution

Amount Religious Education Contributed to The Amount Of Sex Education Received In Your Home:

1. Contributed A Great Deal
2. Made A Moderate Contribution
3. No Contribution

## APPENDIX C

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR ALL STUDENTS

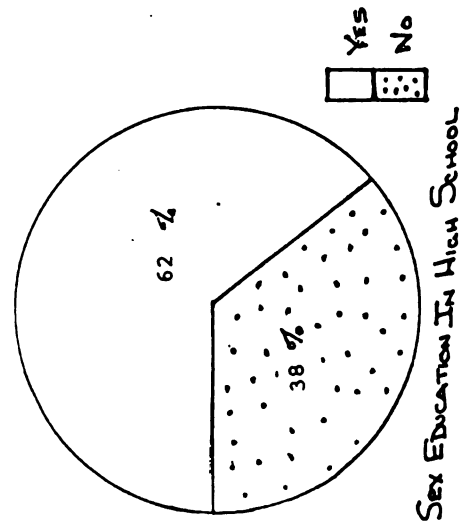
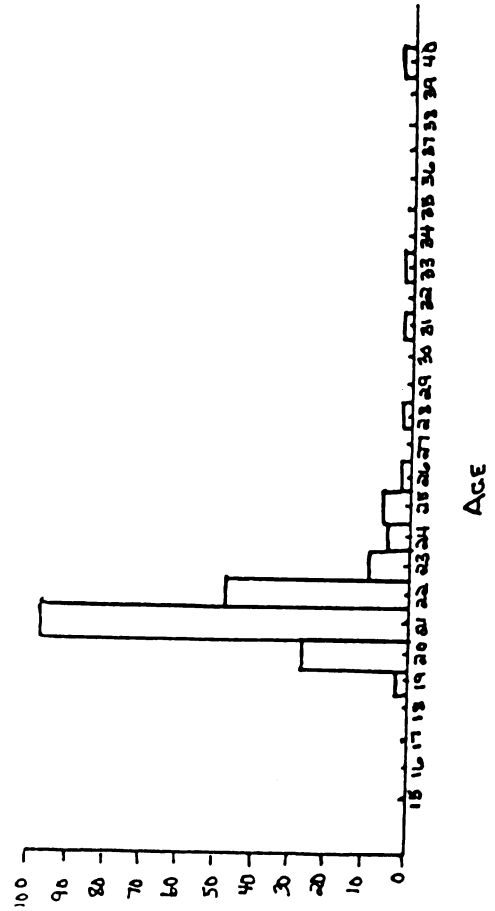
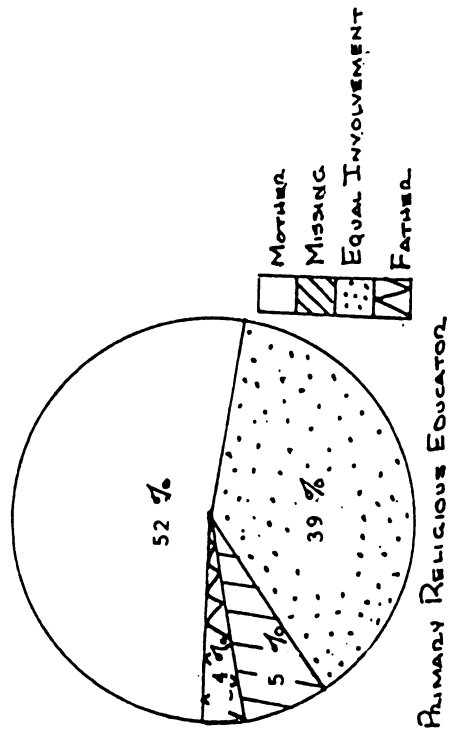
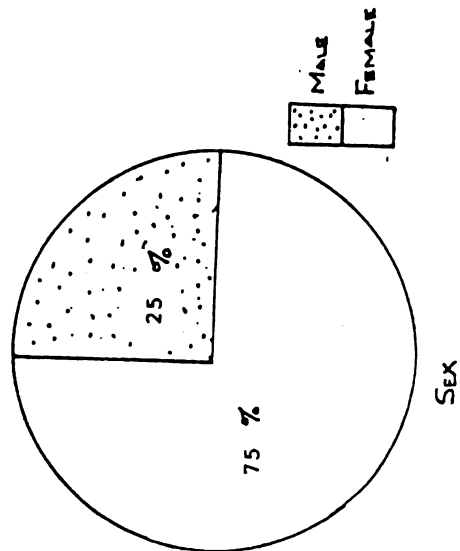


TABLE 5 (CONT'D.)

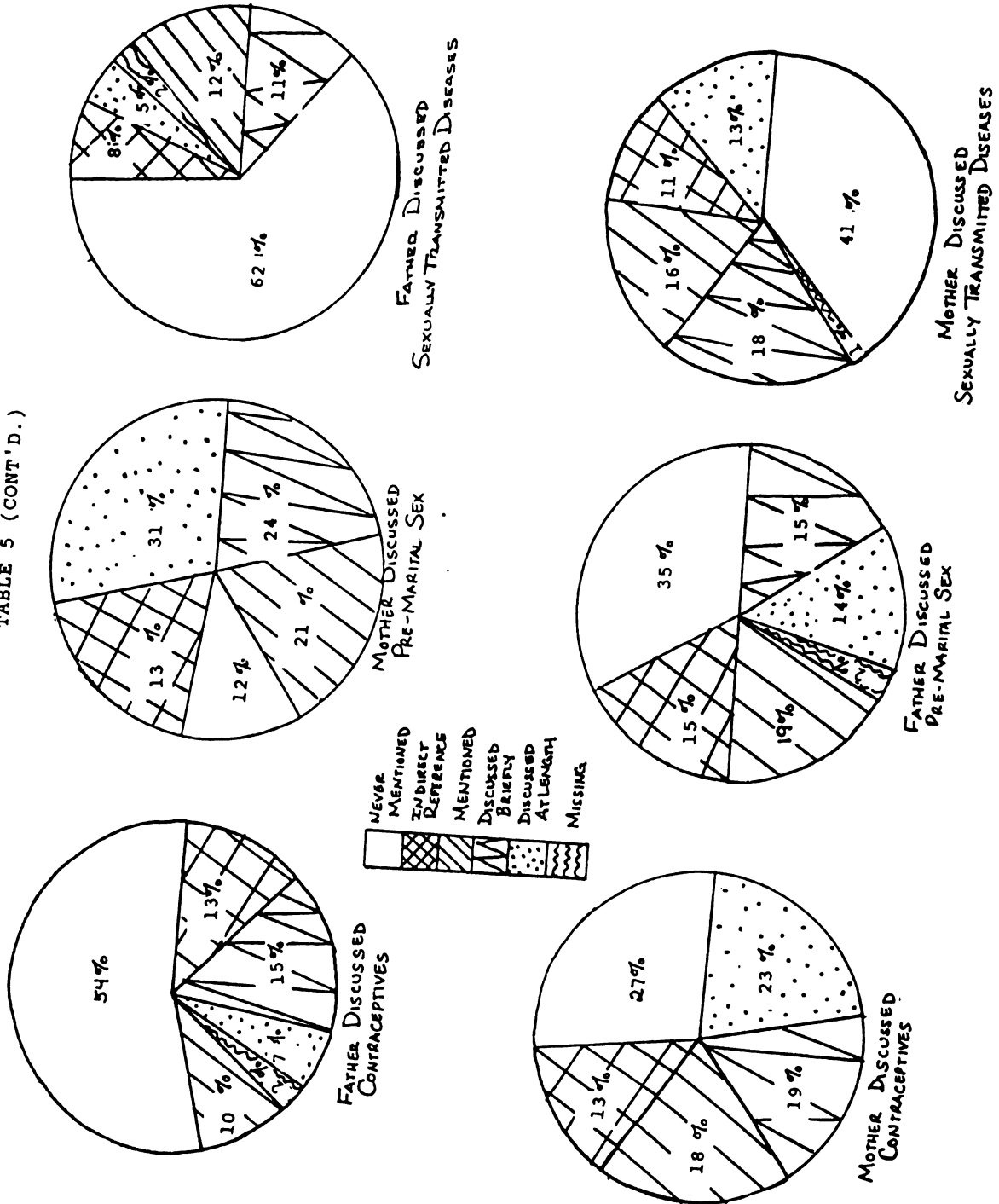


TABLE 5 (CONT'D.)

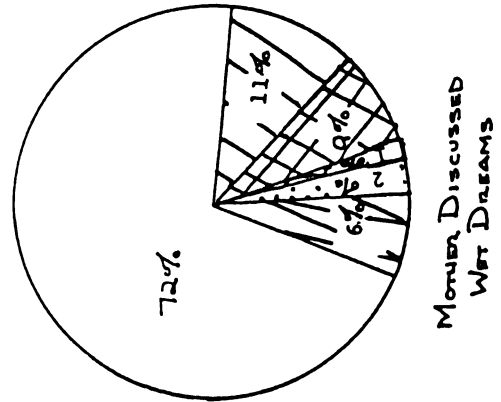
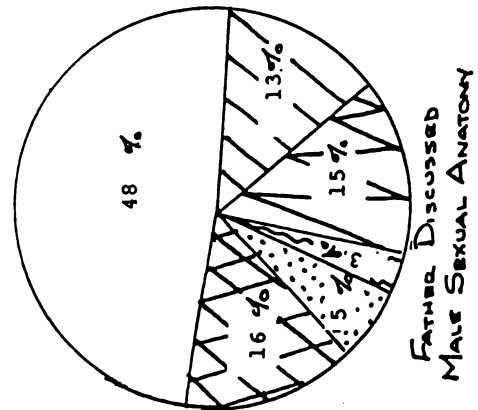
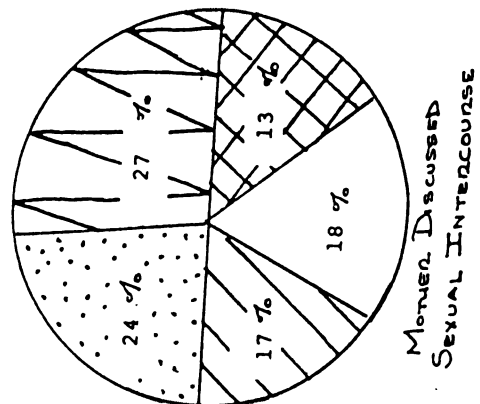
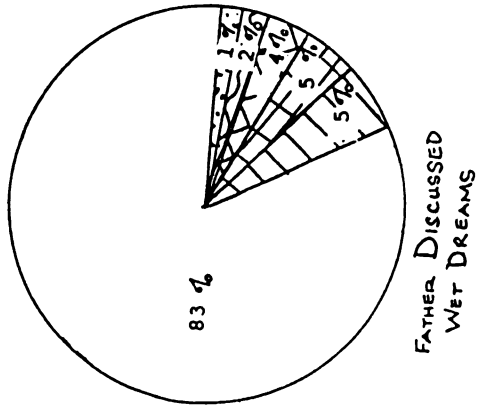
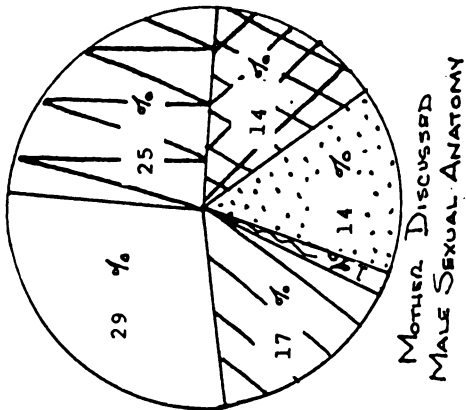
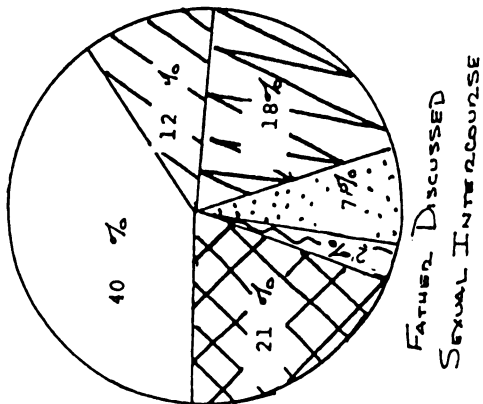


TABLE 5 (CONT'D.)

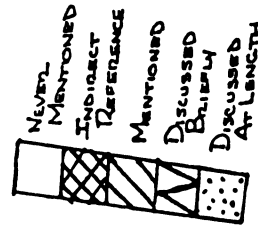
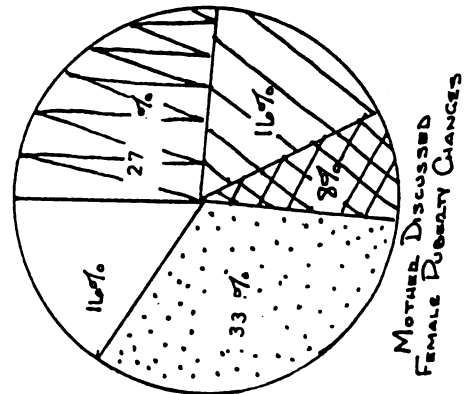
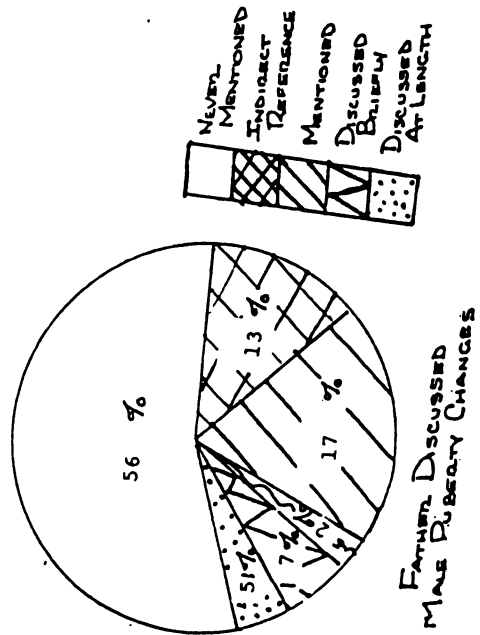
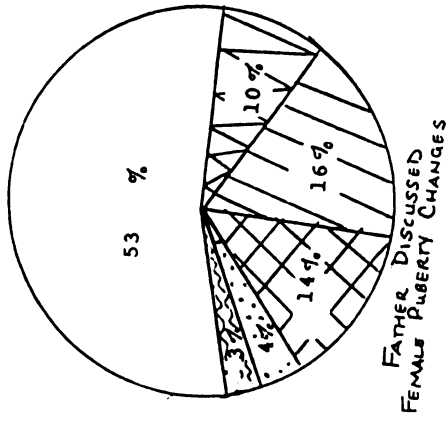
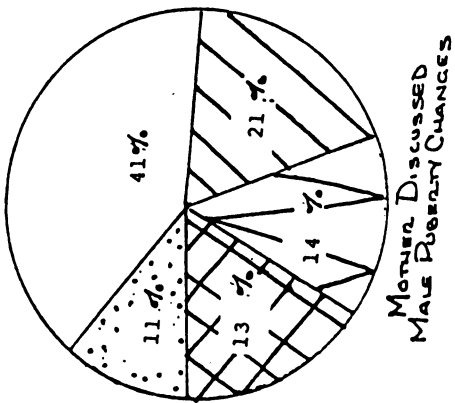


TABLE 5 (CONT'D.)

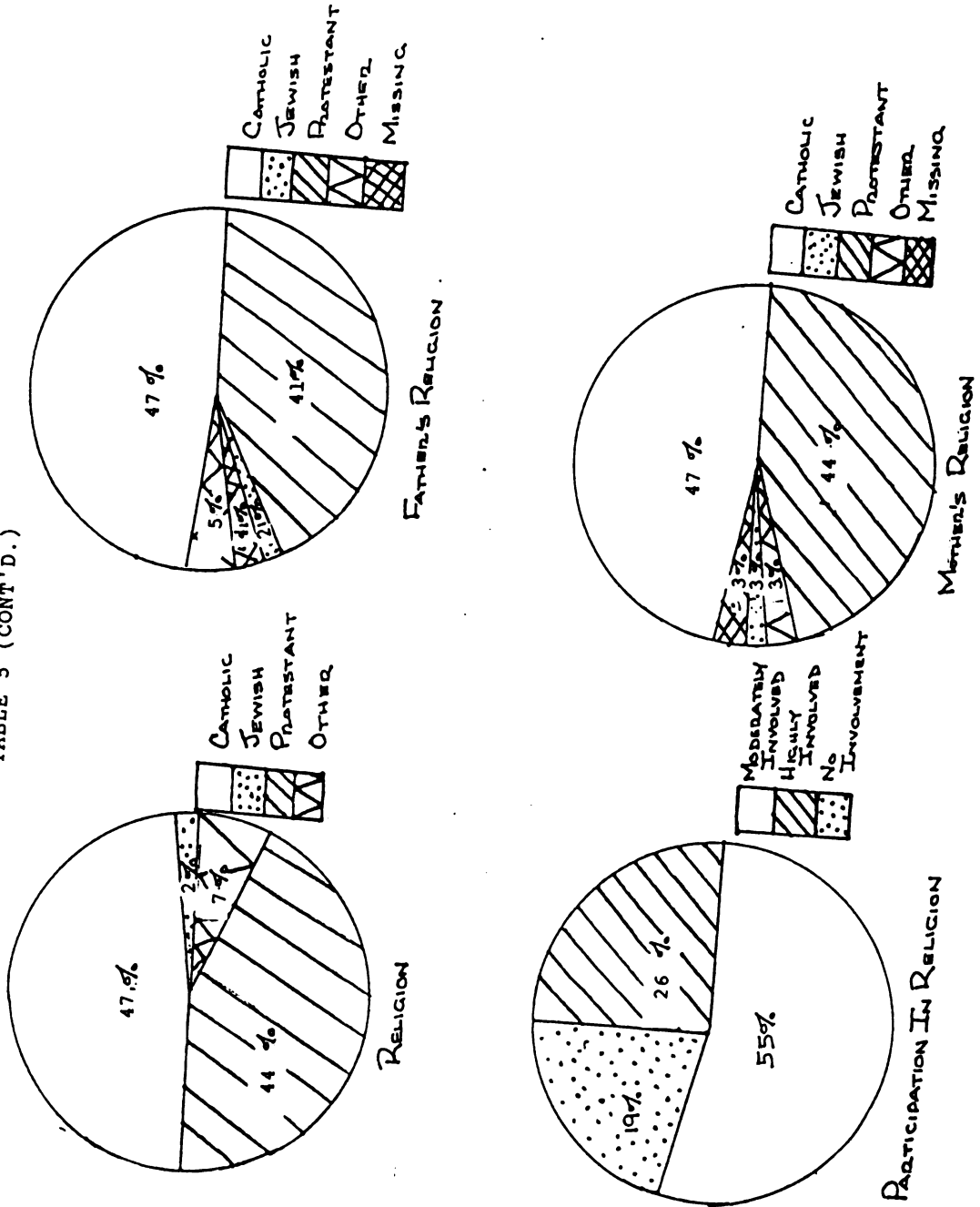
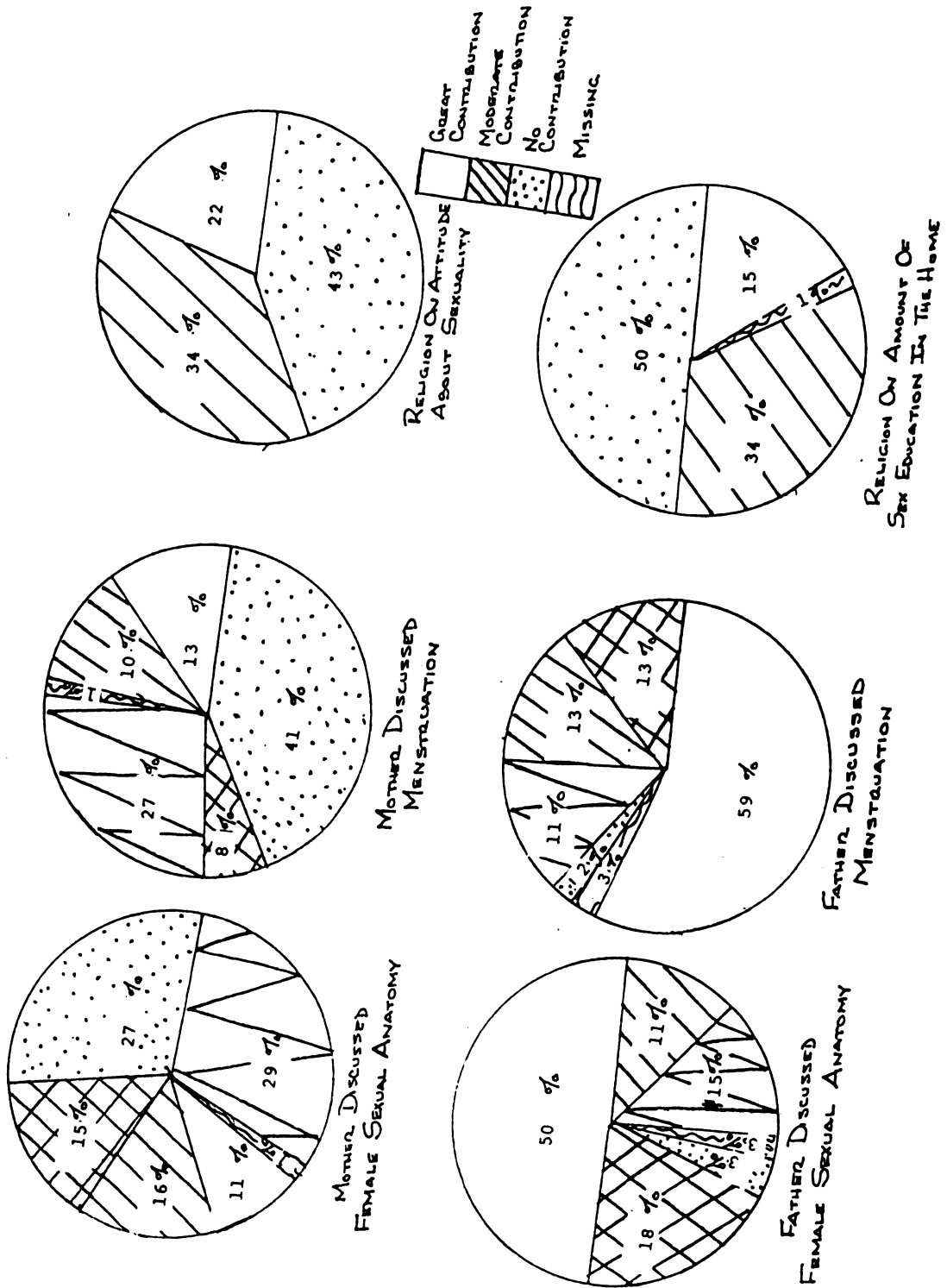


TABLE 5 (CONT'D.)





**APPENDIX D**

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR CATHOLIC STUDENTS

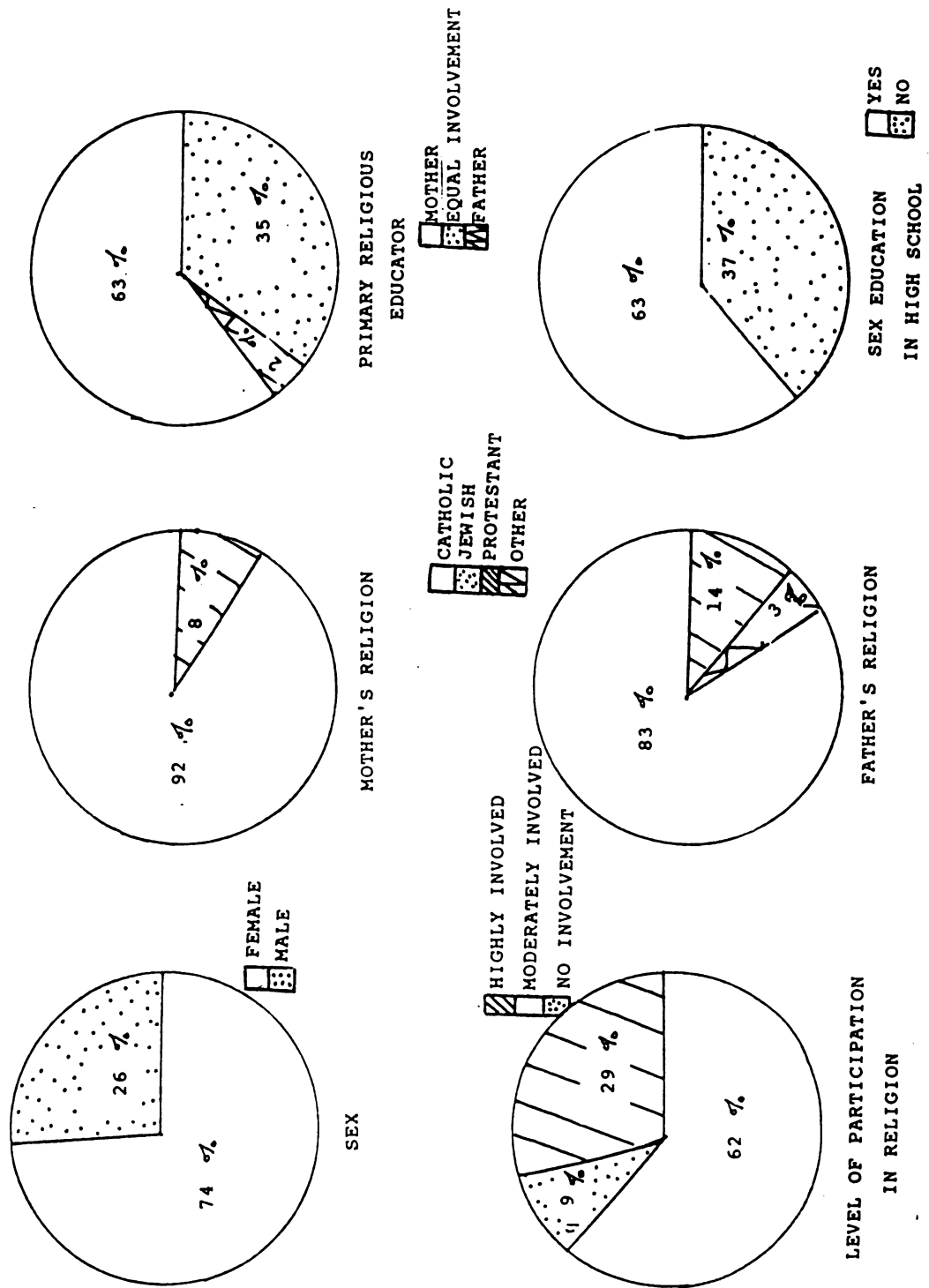


TABLE 6 (CONT'D.)

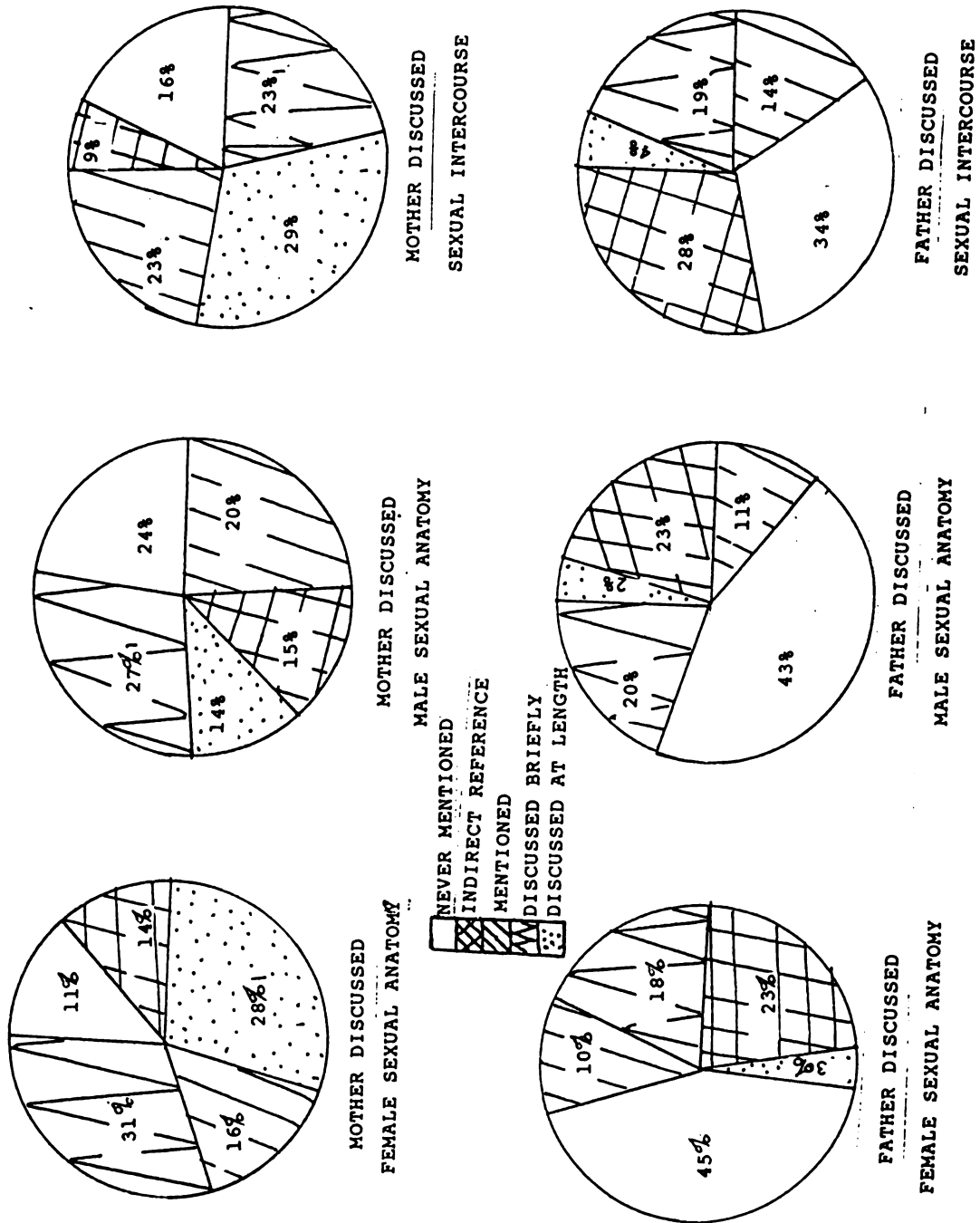


TABLE 6 (CONT'D.)

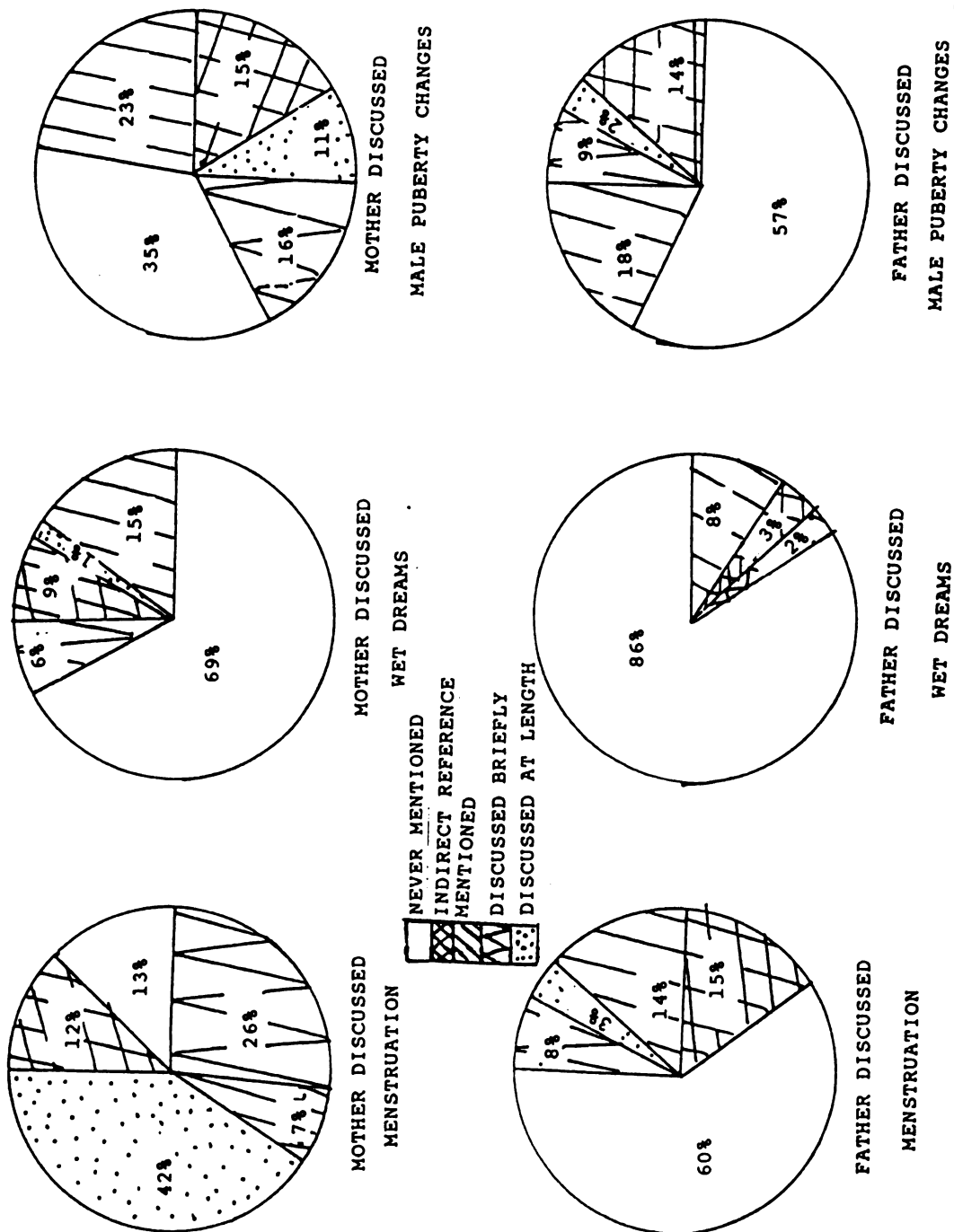


TABLE 6 (CONT'D.)

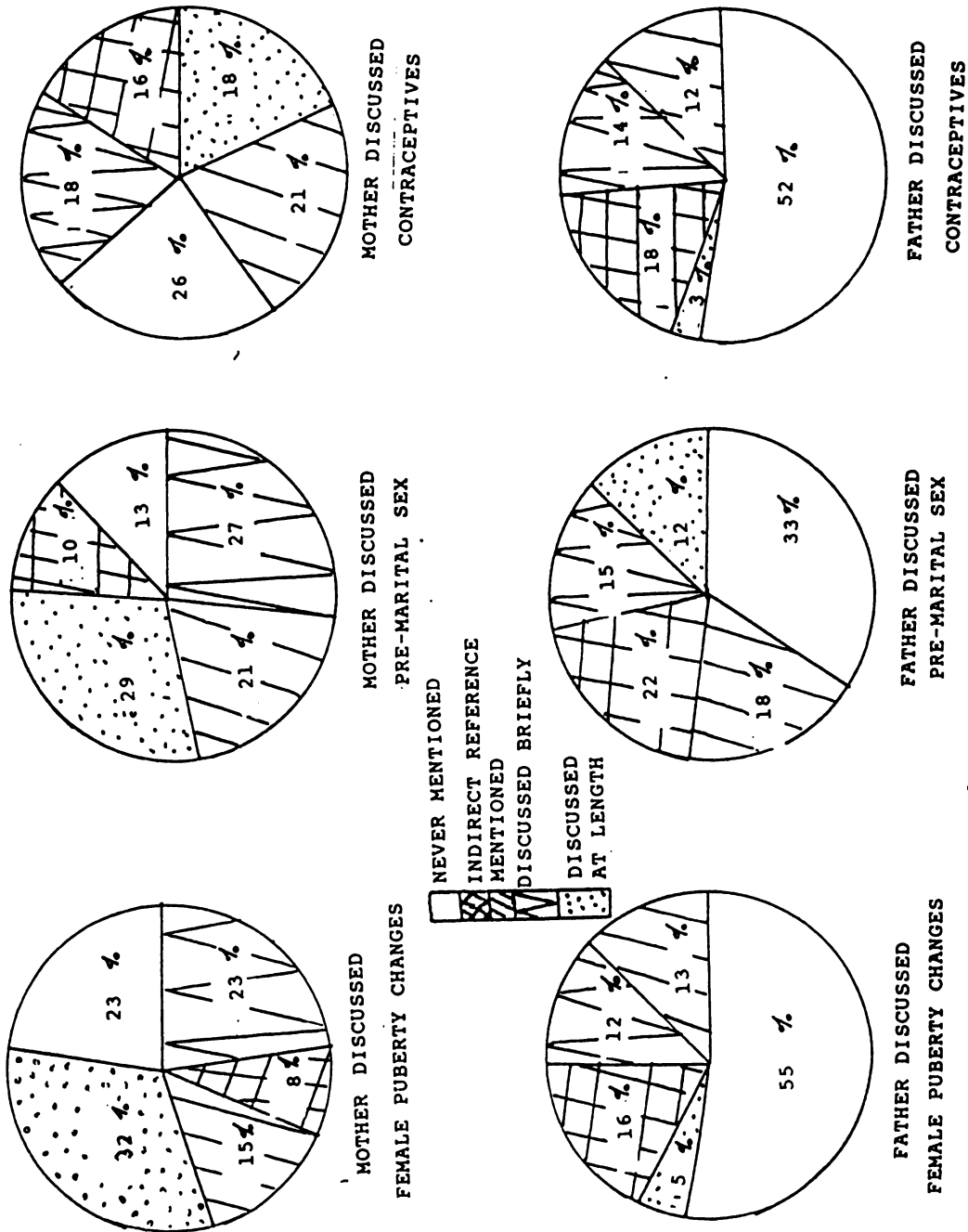
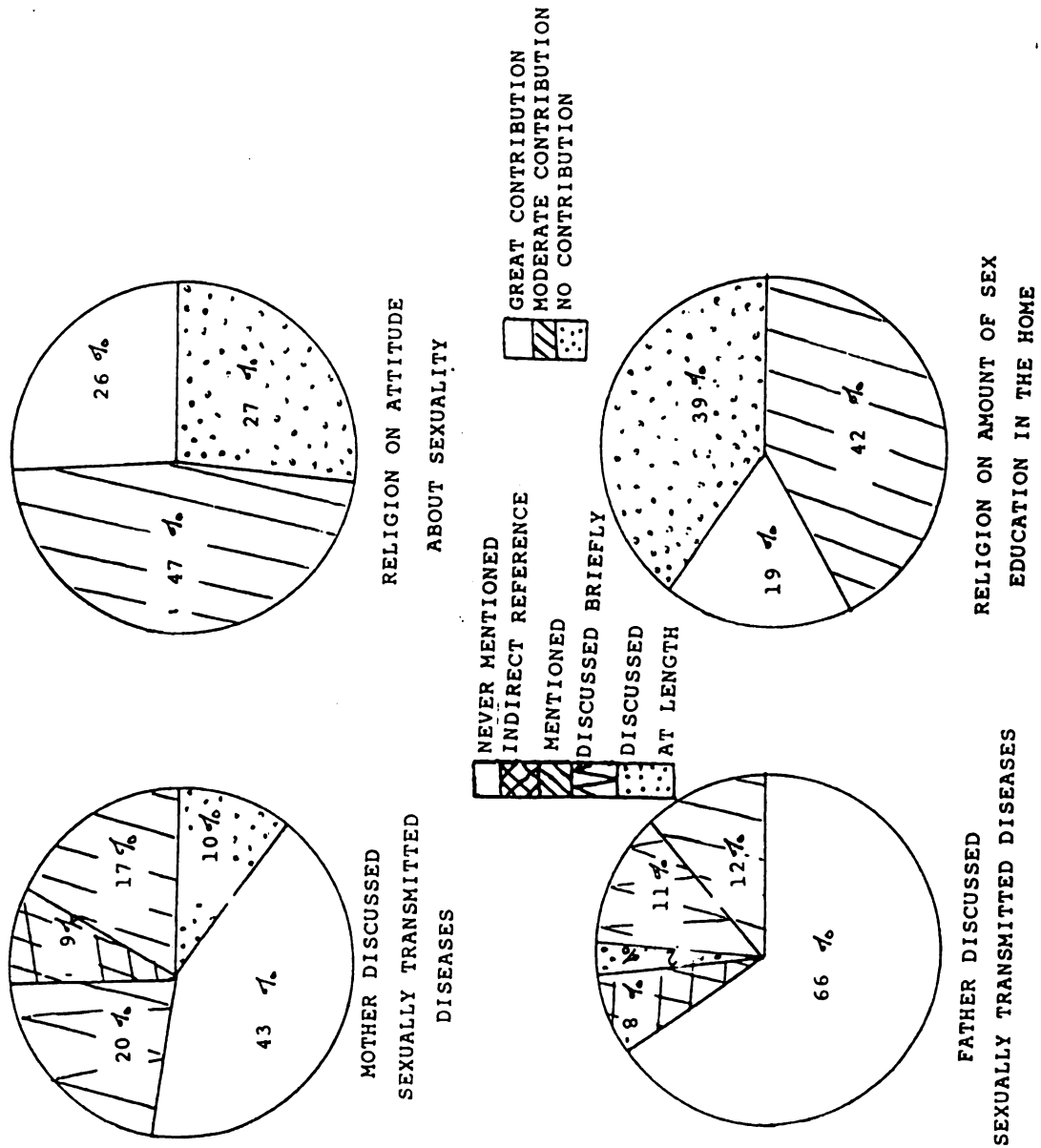


TABLE 6 (CONT'D.)



## APPENDIX E

TABLE 7  
PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR JEWISH STUDENTS

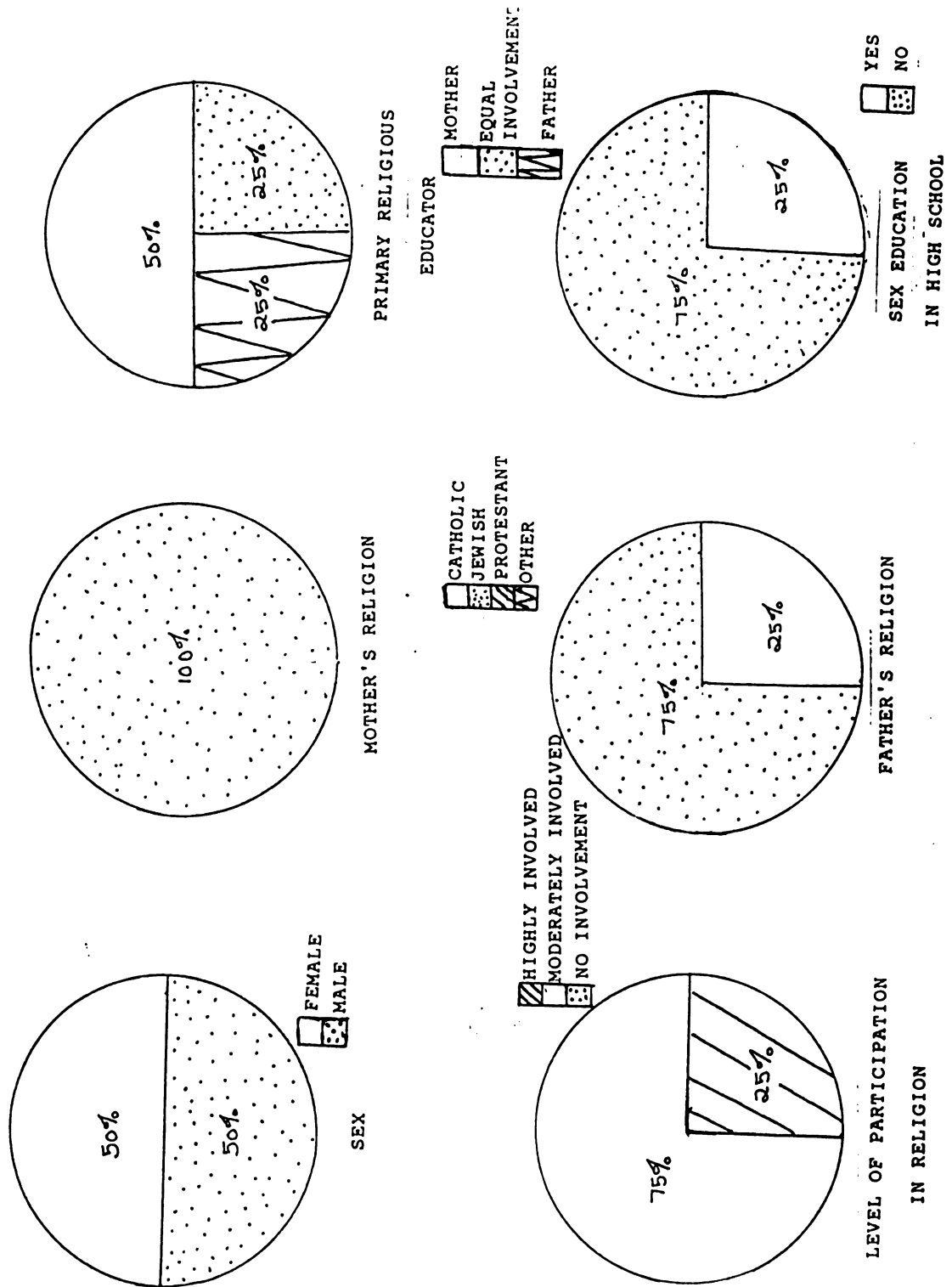




TABLE 7 (CONT'D.)

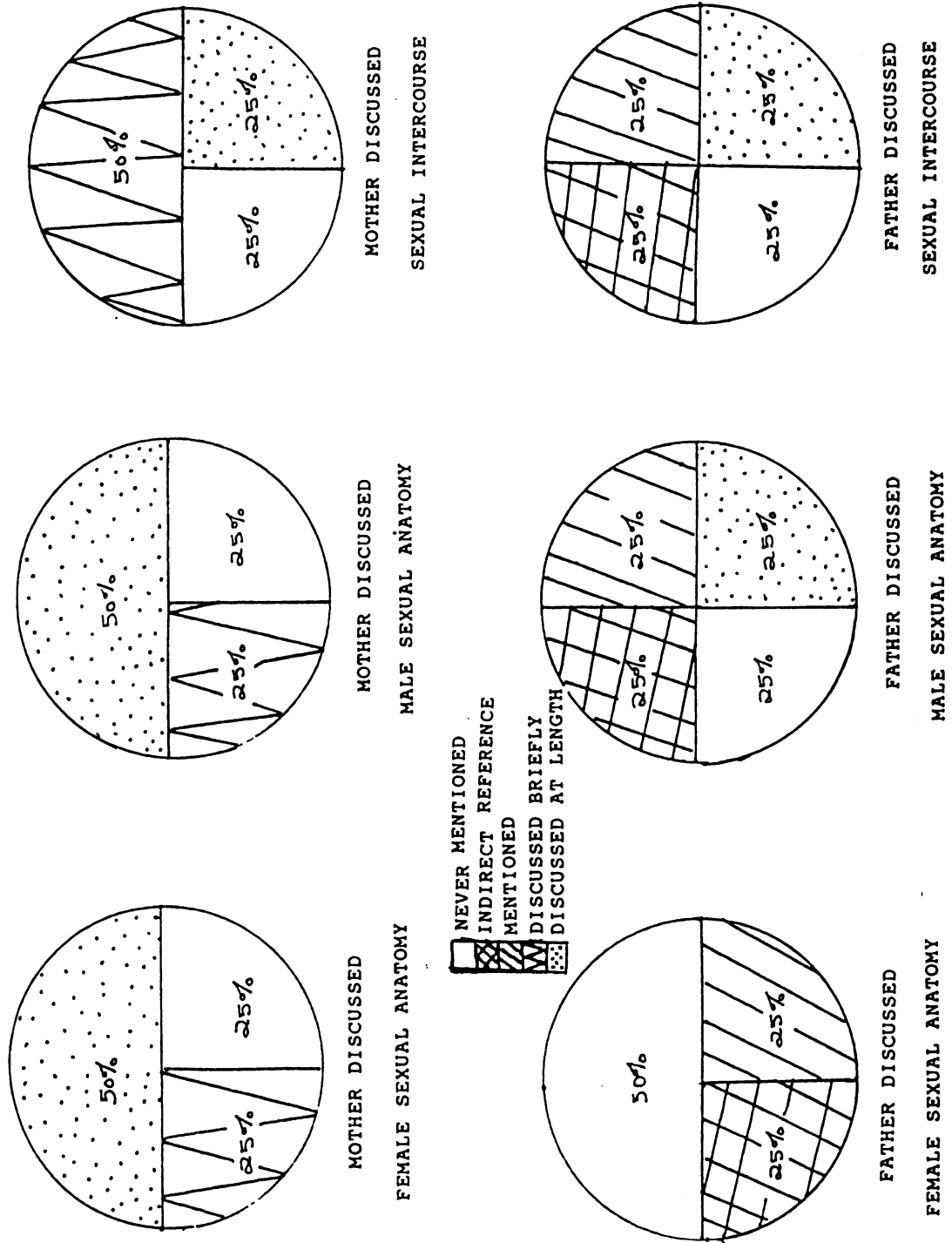
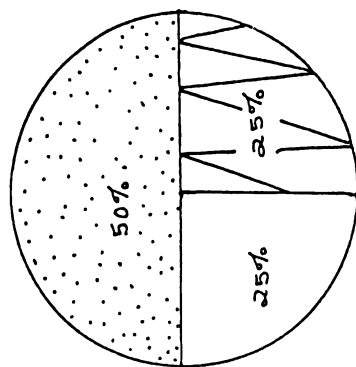


TABLE 7 (CONT'D.)



MOTHER DISCUSSED  
MENSTRUATION

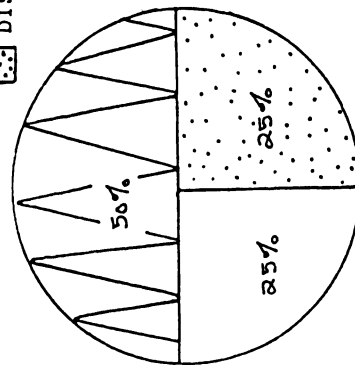
NEVER MENTIONED

INDIRECT REFERENCE

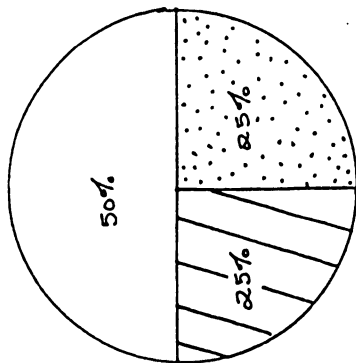
MENTIONED

DISCUSSED BRIEFLY

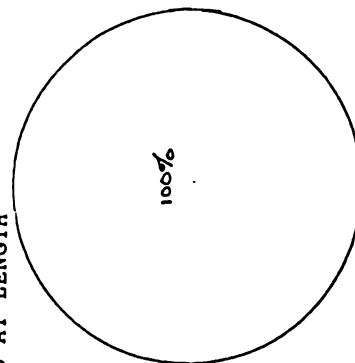
DISCUSSED AT LENGTH



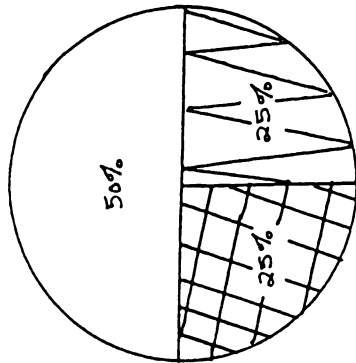
FATHER DISCUSSED  
MENSTRUATION



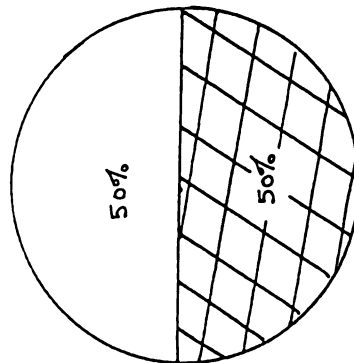
MOTHER DISCUSSED  
WET DREAMS



FATHER DISCUSSED  
WET DREAMS



MOTHER DISCUSSED  
MALE PUBERTY CHANGES



FATHER DISCUSSED  
MALE PUBERTY CHANGES

TABLE 7 (CONT'D.)

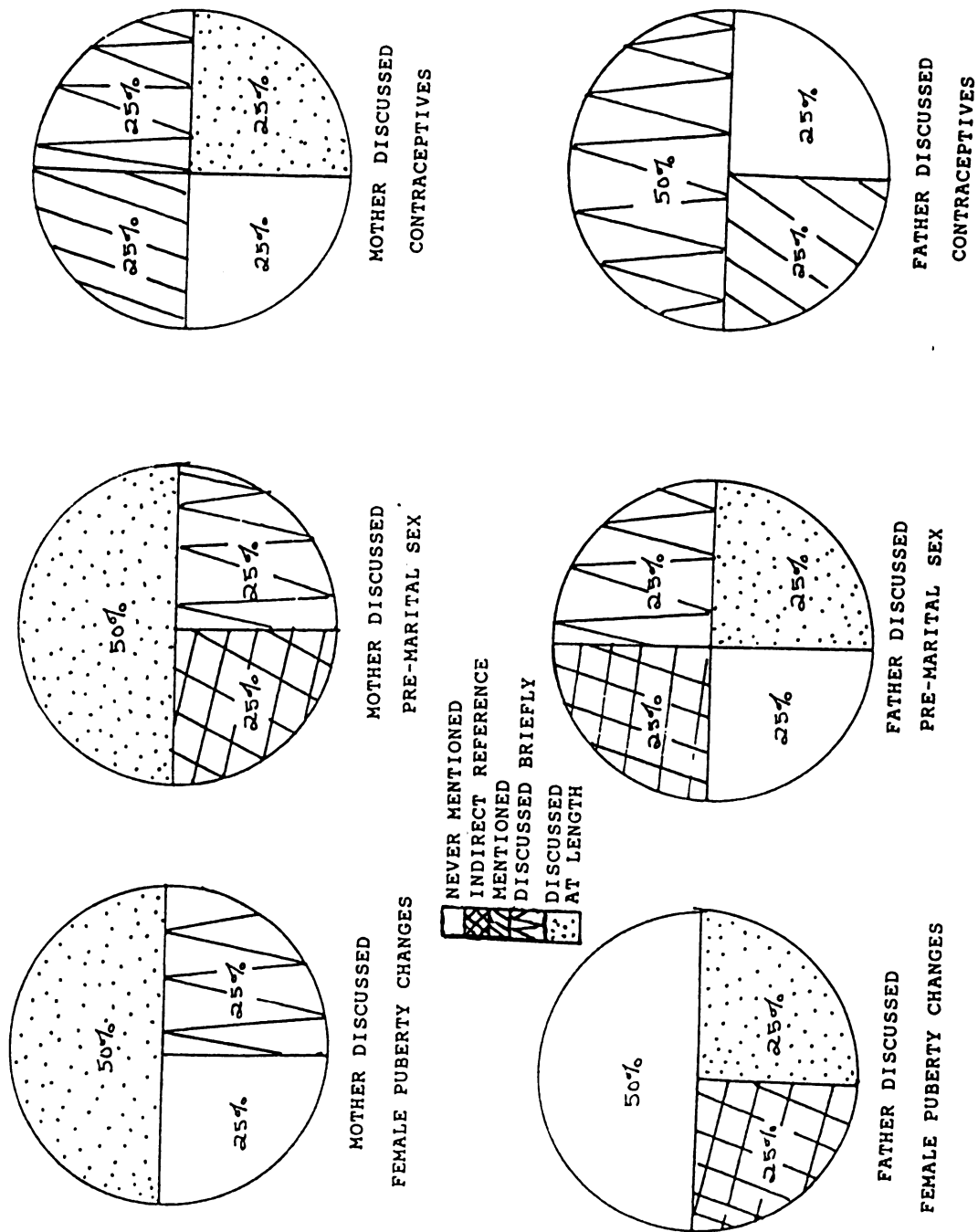
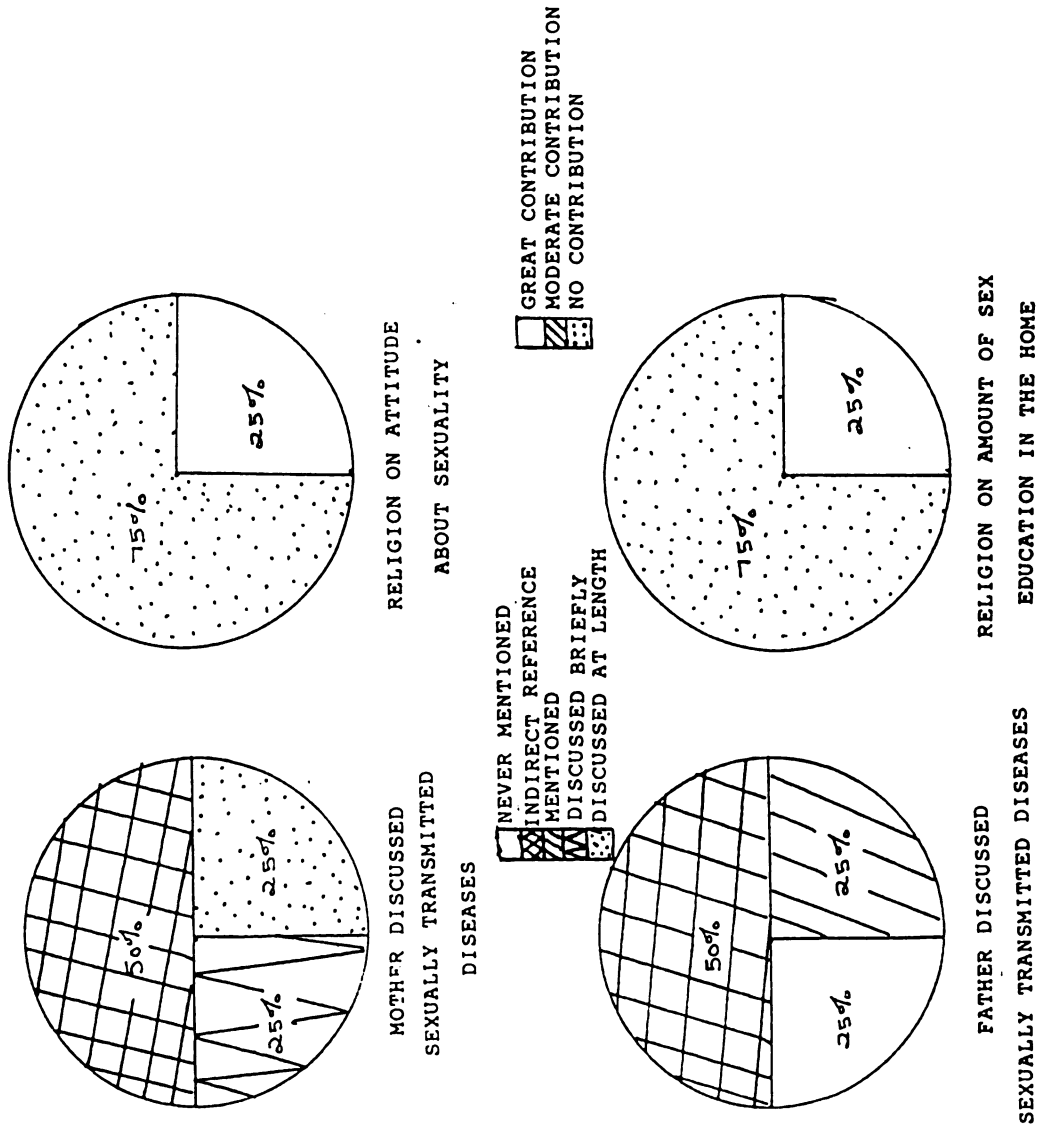


TABLE 7 (CONT'D.)



APPENDIX F

TABLE 8  
PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR PROTESTANT STUDENTS

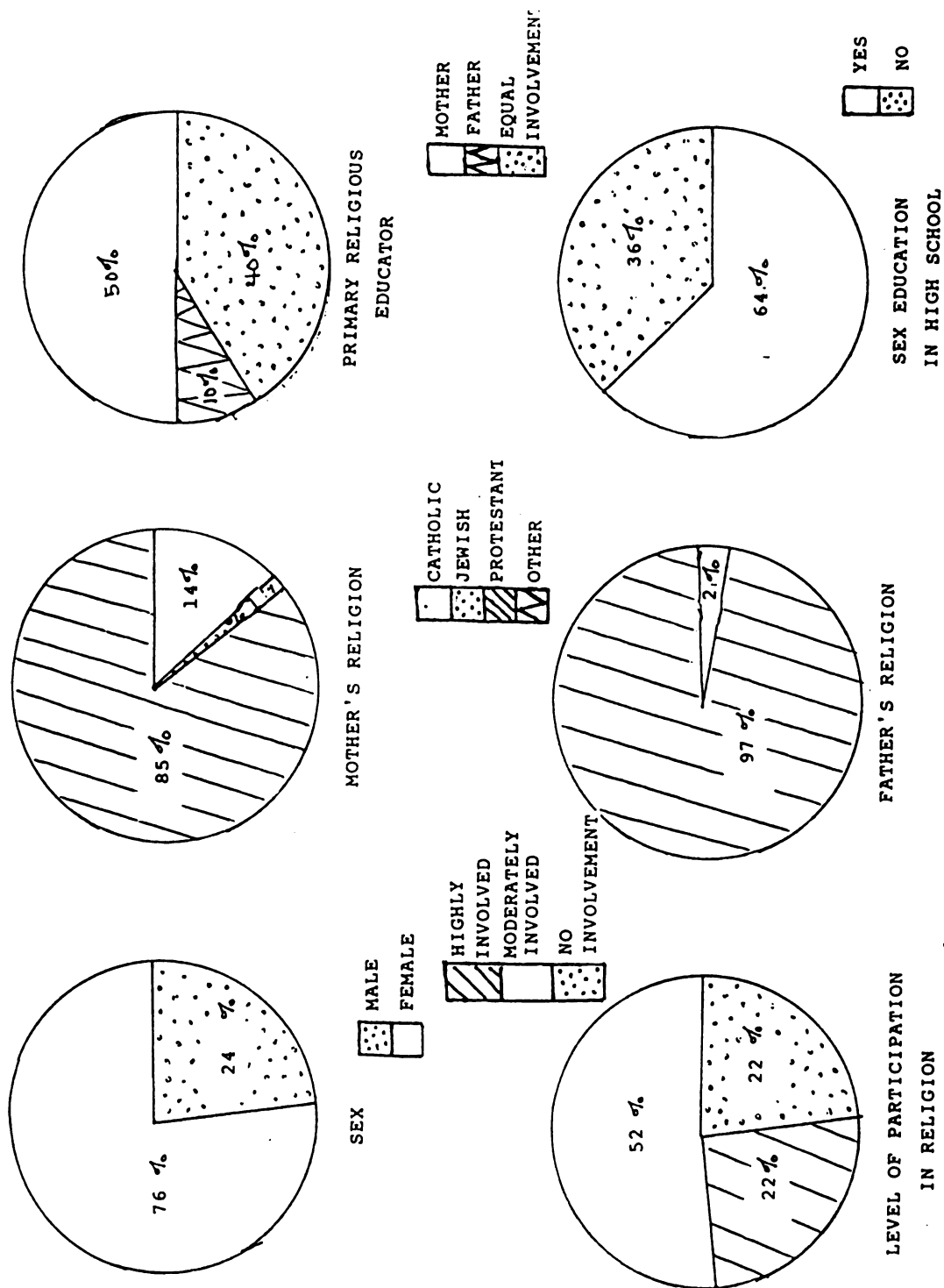


TABLE 8 (CONT'D.)

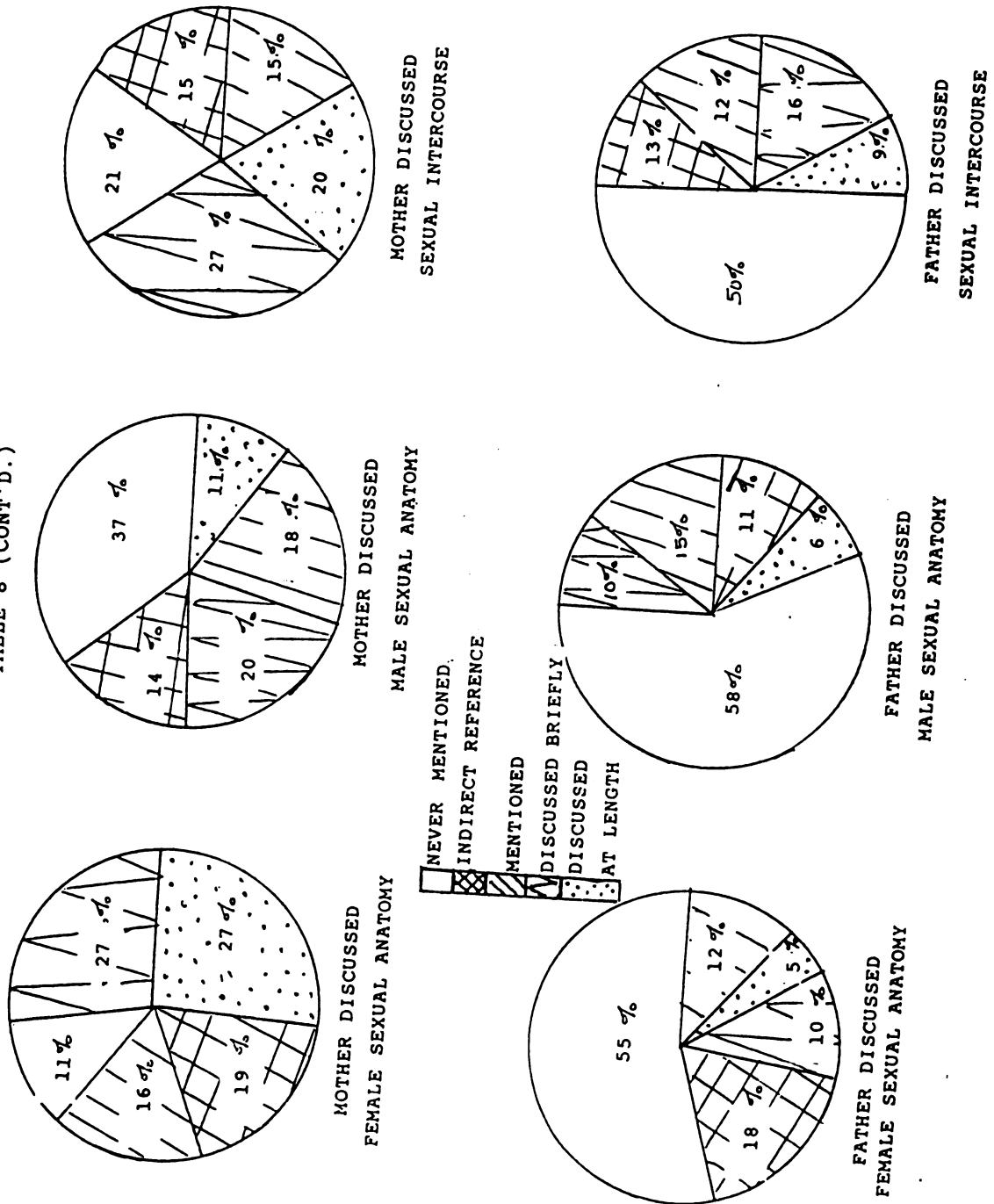


TABLE 8 (CONT'D.)

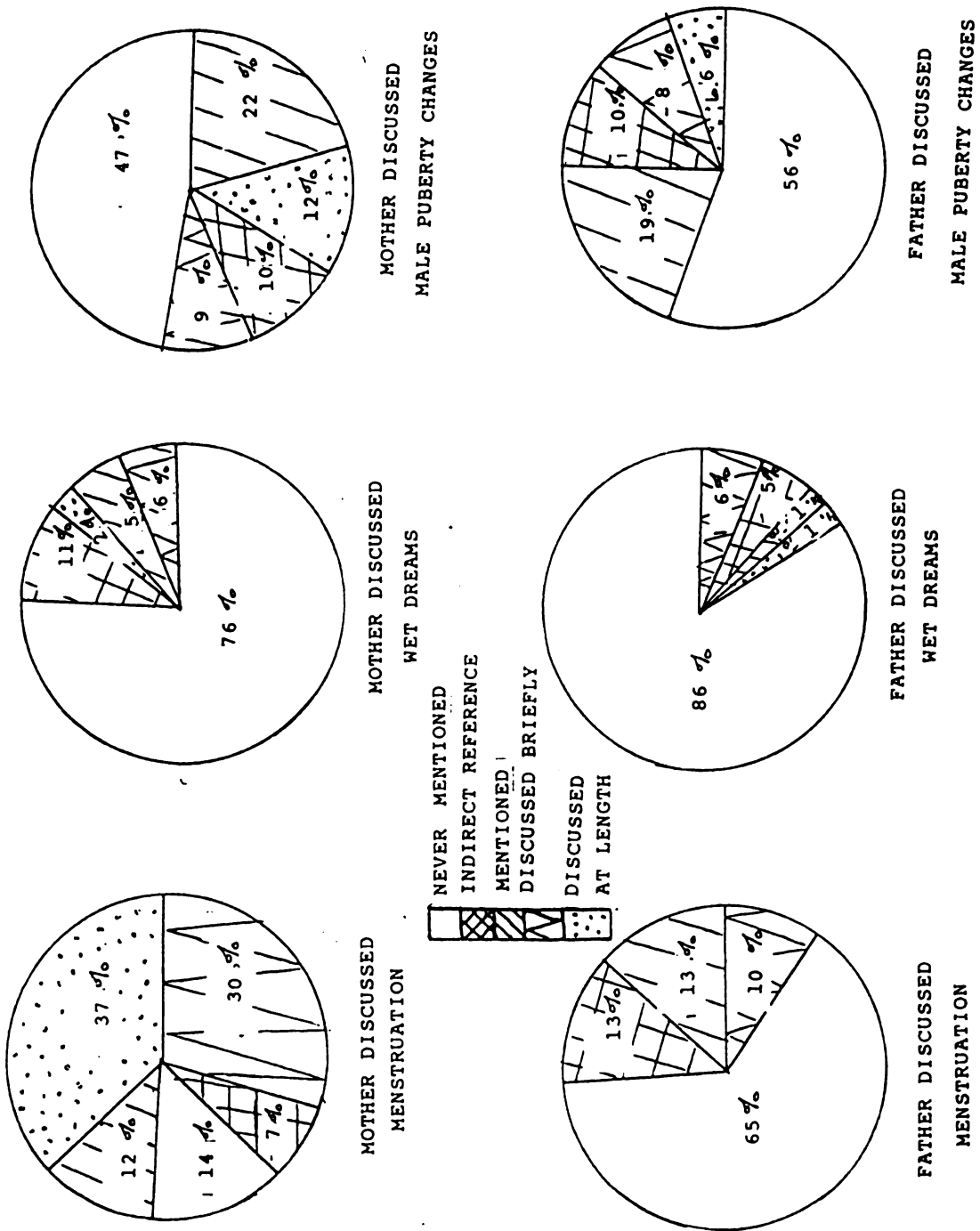




TABLE 8 (CONT'D.)

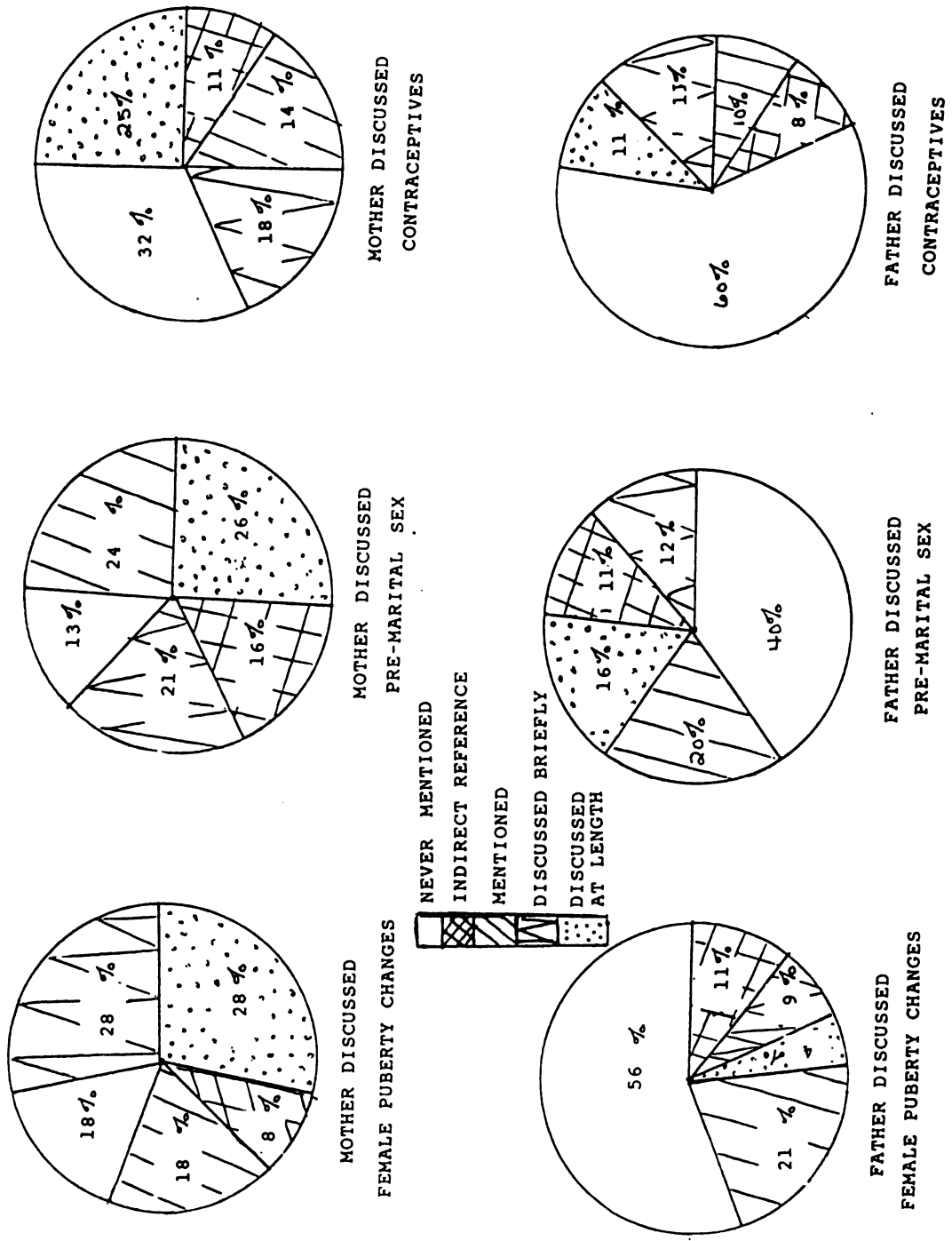
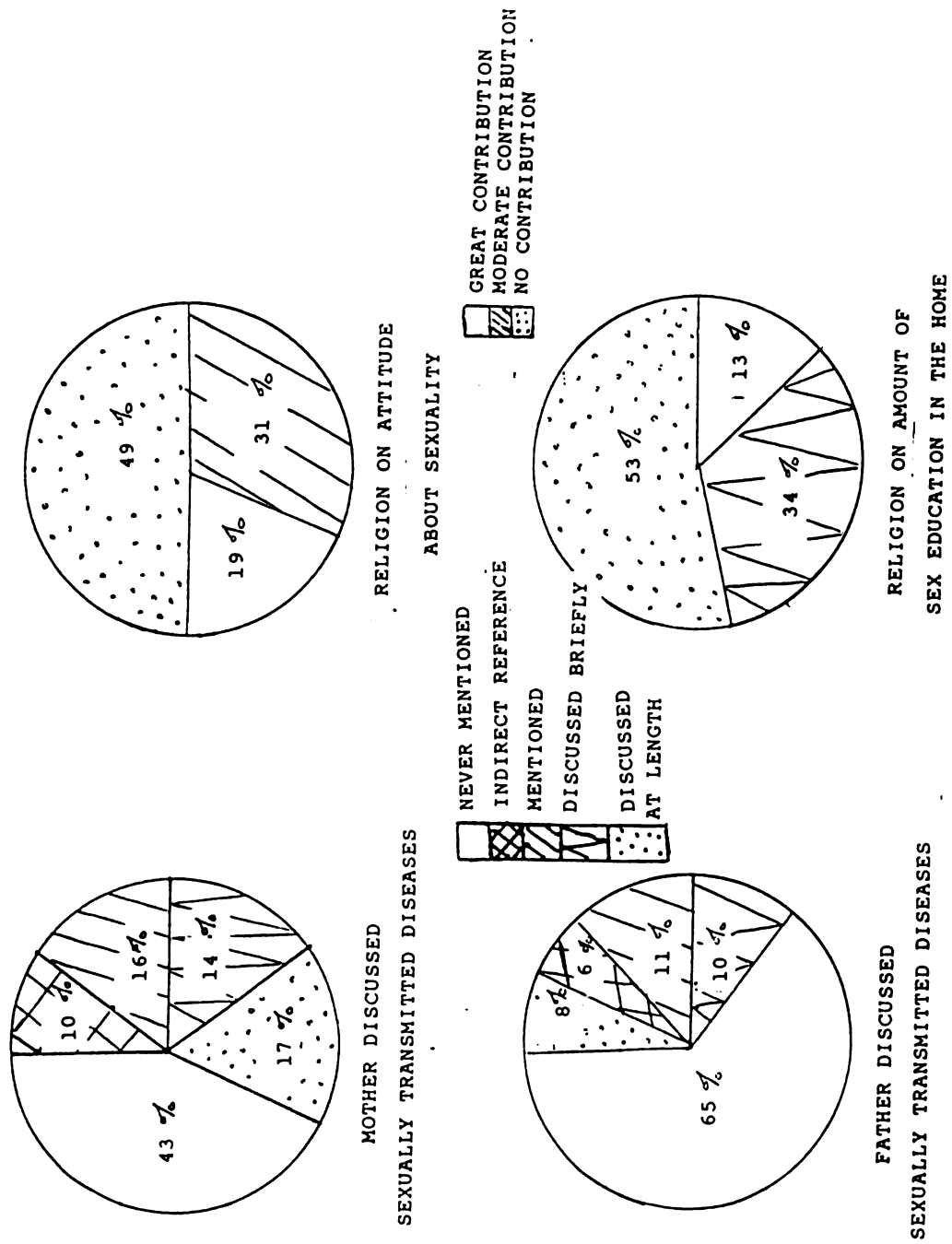


TABLE 8 (CONT'D.)



APPENDIX G

TABLE 9  
PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN FOR STUDENTS WITH NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

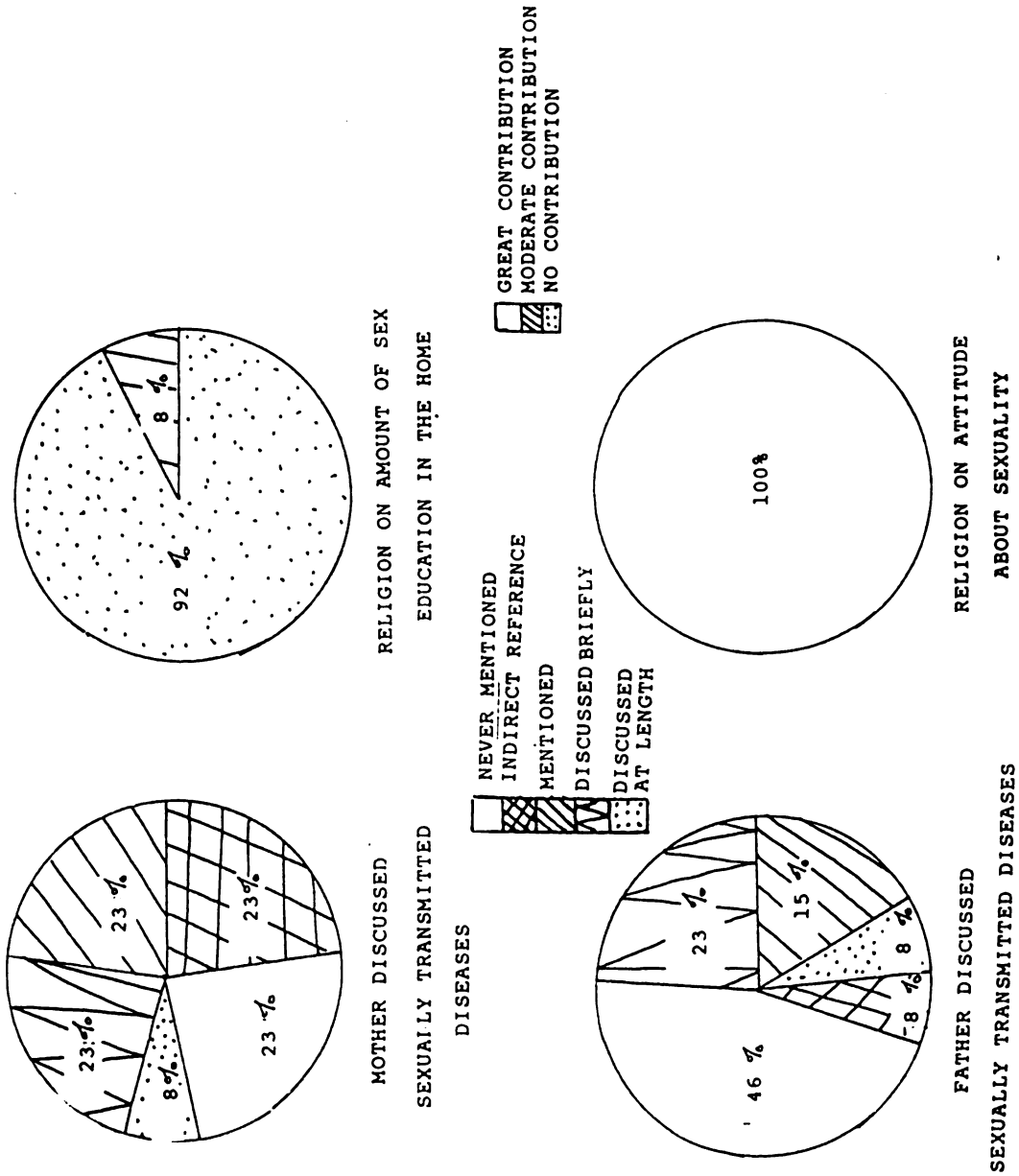


TABLE 9 (CONT'D.)

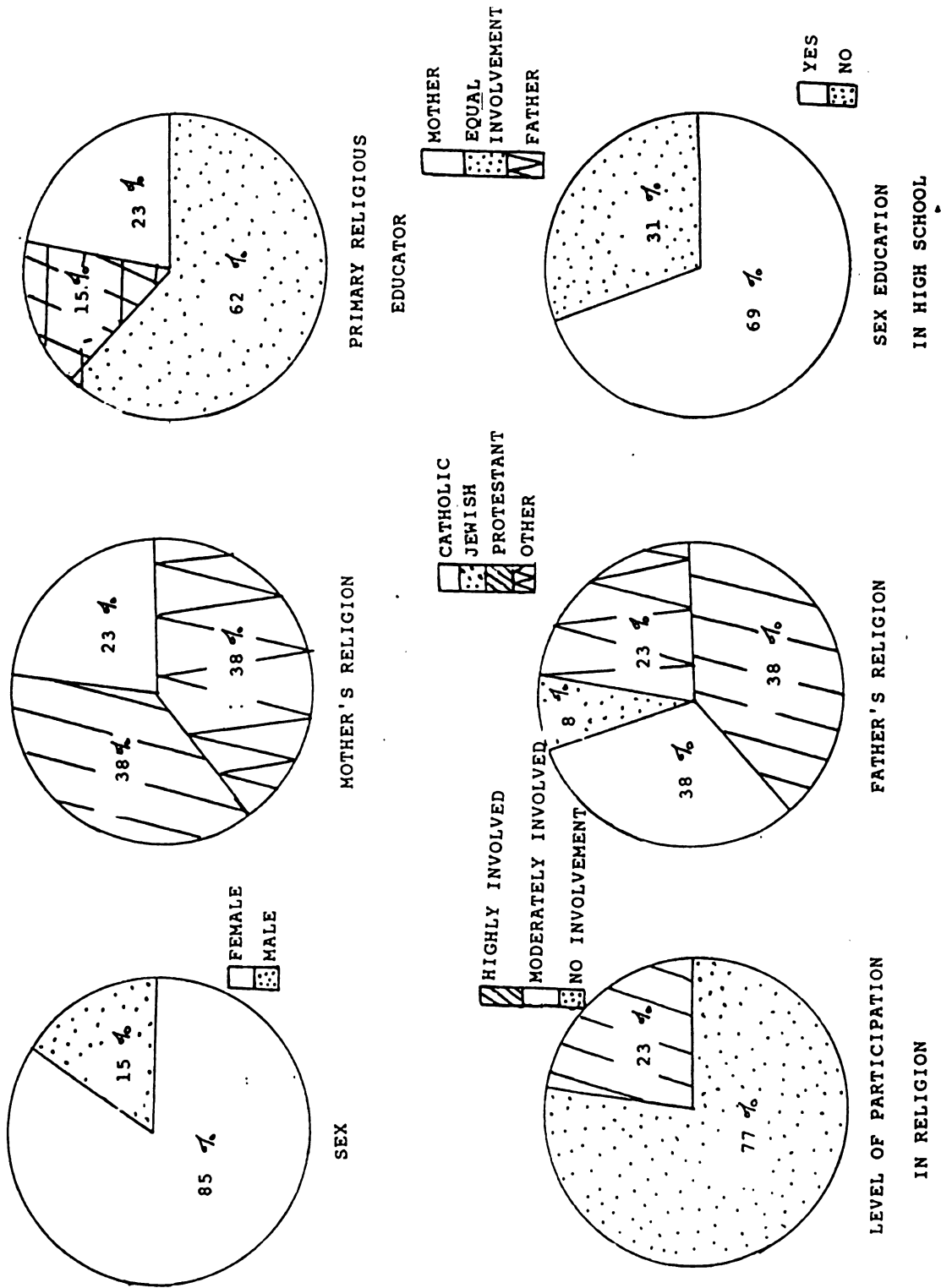


TABLE 9 (CONT'D.)

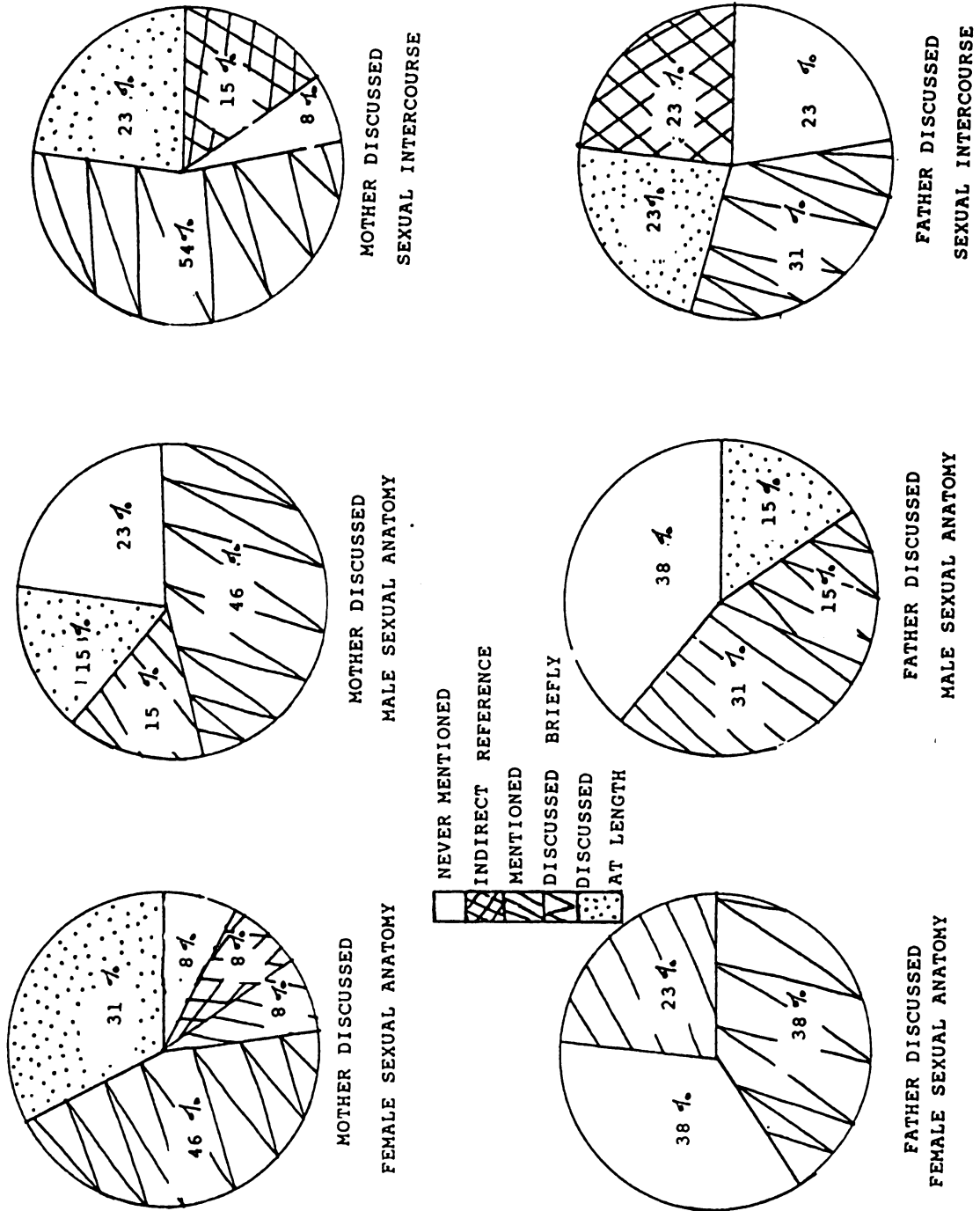


TABLE 9 (CONT'D.)

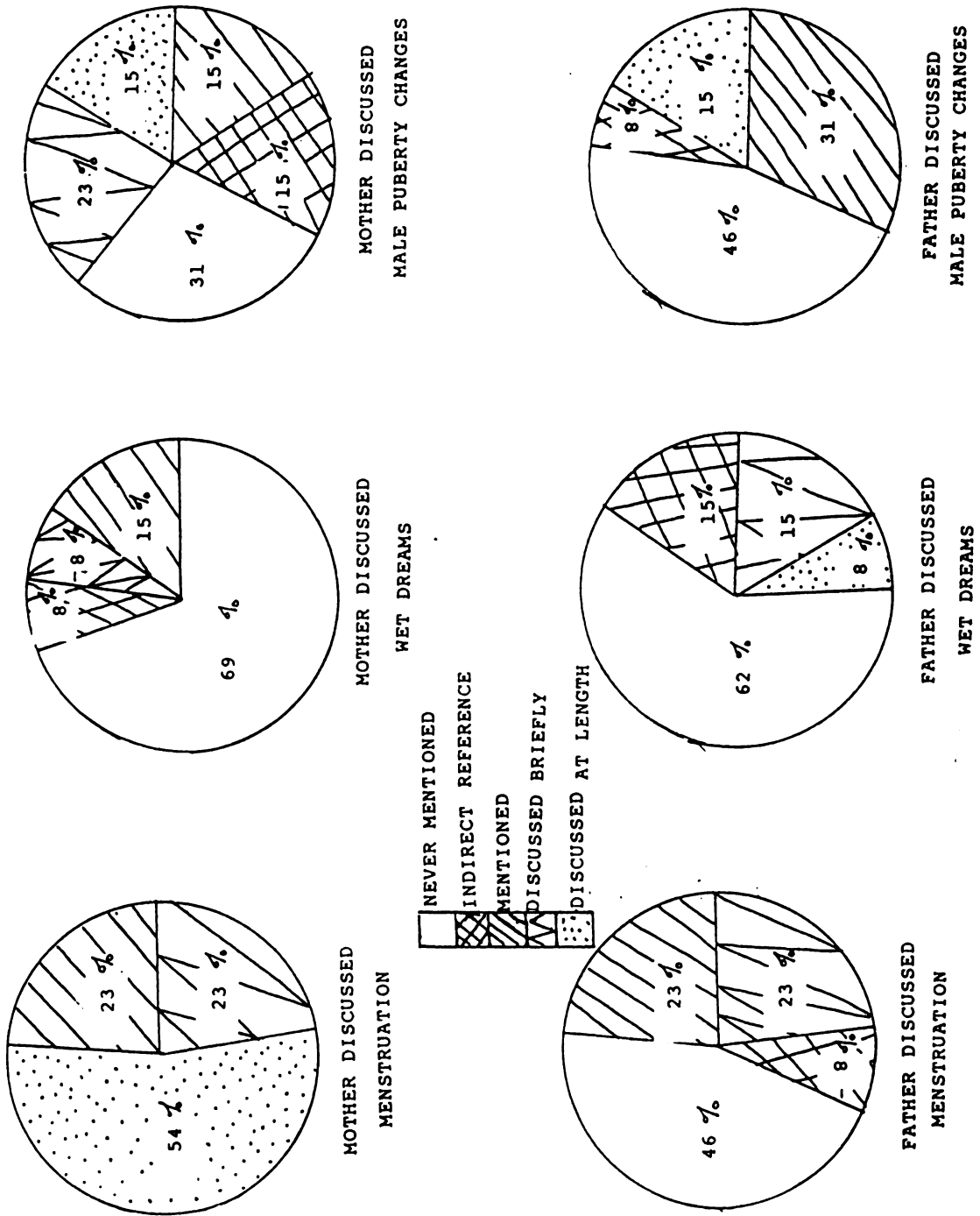
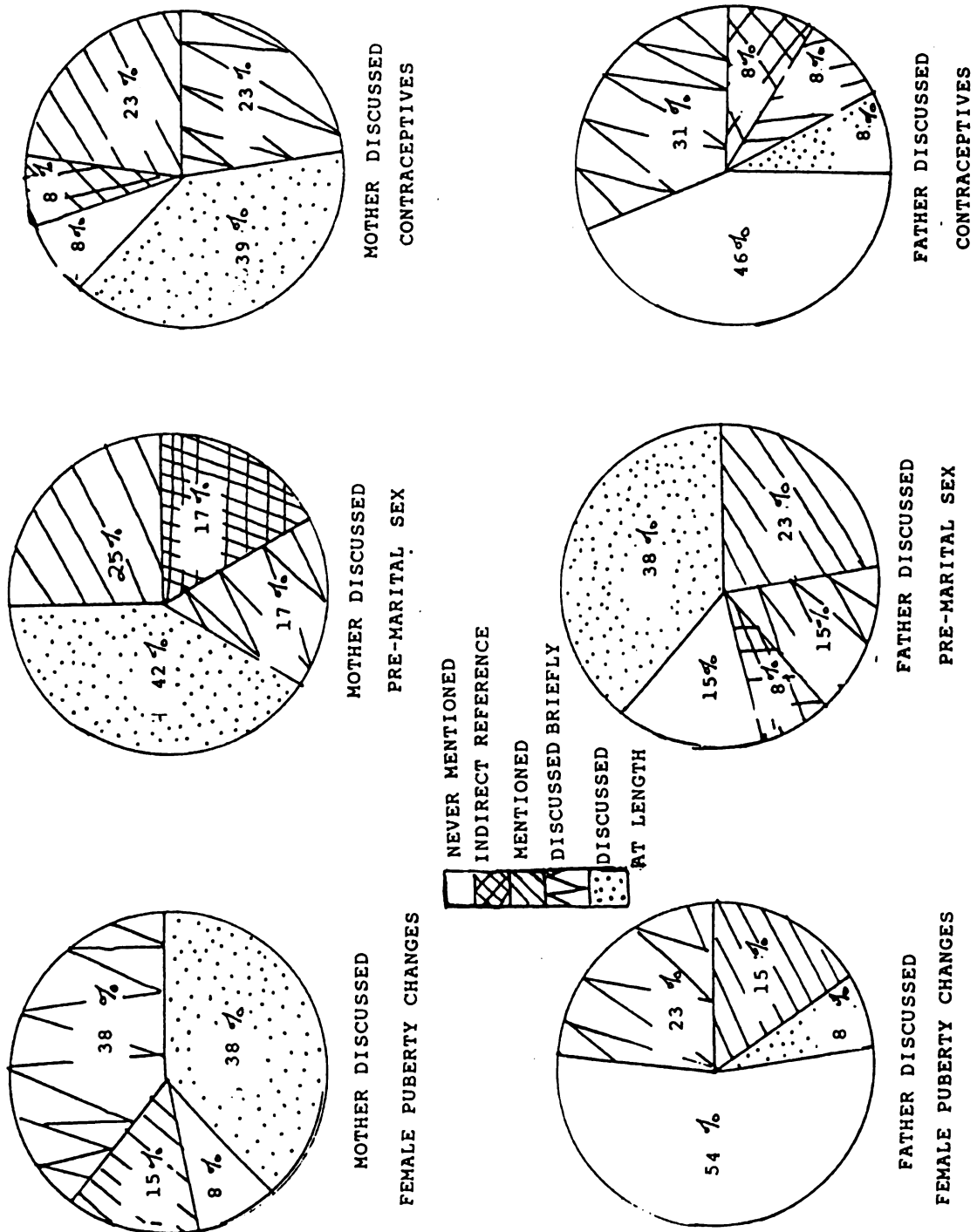


TABLE 9 (CONT'D.)





## LIST OF REFERENCES

## LIST OF REFERENCES

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