

SISTER VERSUS PEER INFLUENCE ON SELECTED PROJECTIVE
DECISIONS MADE BY EARLY ADOLESCENT GIRLS

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Science

by

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The Ohio State University
1970

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express her sincere appreciation to her adviser, Dr. Helene Heye, for her continuous support and guidance in this study.

Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. Julia Dalrymple and Dr. Claribel Taylor, who served on the graduate committee and offered many helpful suggestions.

To her mother and other teachers of Frankfort Junior High School, thanks are expressed for their complete cooperation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Purpose

A child's brothers and sisters are just as much a part of the total home picture as parents. There is a scarcity of research exploring the significance of siblings for one another. "Since the society traditionally holds the parents responsible for the behavior of the child, the focus of research has been almost completely on the parent-child relationship."¹ In the extensive studies of ordinal position, investigators have usually examined the variations in parental treatment of children because of their position in birth order.

Conformity to pressures from peers is seen by a number of investigators as a function of age from the pre-adolescent through the adolescent period. The influence which children in the home have on each other has been given little attention. The study of sibling influence is needed for an adequate understanding of the significance of brothers and/or sisters on the personality development, social control, achievement, and motivation of each other. An understanding of the extent of such influence would be of

¹ Donald P. Irish, "Sibling Interaction: A Neglected Aspect in Family Life Research," Sourcebook in Marriage and the Family, ed. by Marvin B. Sussman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), pp. 293-300.

particular interest to parents and to teachers of junior and senior high school students, especially in teaching personal and family relations.

Problem

In this study an attempt was made to determine whether sisters have a greater influence than do peers on selected projective decisions made by early adolescent girls; if the influence of sisters varies by the types of decisions made; if the influence of an older sister varies according to the grade level of the early adolescent girl; whether an older sister exerts more influence than does a younger sister; and if an early adolescent who lives in a rural area is more influenced by an older sister than is a girl who lives in an urban area.

Basic Questions

1. Is an early adolescent girl with an older sister more influenced by a sister or by peers in making selected projective decisions?
2. Is the early adolescent girl more influenced by a sister in making certain specific types of decisions and more influenced by her peers in making other specific types of decisions?
3. Is there a difference in the amount of influence exerted by an older sister on girls at different grade levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades)?

4. Does an older sister exert more influence on an early adolescent in making selected projective decisions than does a younger sister?

5. Is an early adolescent girl from a rural area more influenced by her older sister than is an early adolescent girl from an urban area?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no difference in the influence from an older sister and from peers on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions.

2. There is no difference in the influence exerted by a sister and by peers on an early adolescent girl in making two specific types of decisions, personal and social.

3. There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older sister on girls of different grade levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades).

4. There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older and a younger sister on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions.

5. There is no difference in the influence of an older sister on an early adolescent girl from an urban area and one from a rural area.

Sample and Design

The research design used was a scientific survey static group

comparison. Junior high school girls, grades seven through nine, comprised the sample. There were two groups of girls at each grade level. Each girl in one group had an older sister. Each girl in the second group had a younger sister. The sample was taken from classes at the Frankford Junior High School, Frankfort, Indiana.

Measurement Technique

The girls were asked to respond to a paper-pencil instrument consisting of twelve situations in which a choice was to be made between two alternatives in making a decision. They were asked to respond according to what the girl in the situation would be more likely to do, not what she should do. One of the alternatives in the situation was favored by the girl's sister; the other alternative was favored by the girl's friends. The twelve situations were divided according to two specific types of decisions to be made. One type of decision concerned the girl personally and was referred to as a personal decision. The second type of decision, a social decision, concerned not only the girl but also the feelings of others. It was assumed that the subject would project herself into the position of the girl in the situation and reveal by her response how she would be inclined to respond in a similar situation.

The instrument was an adaptation of the Cross-Pressures Test by Clay V. Brittain. Items number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 were adapted from the original instrument. Items number 7, 9, 11,

and 12 were originated for this study. (Appendix A)

A ten-item question sheet followed the paper-pencil instrument for purposes of identifying each respondent as to age, grade level, area of residence, and whether they had an older or a younger sister. (Appendix A, item 13)

Analysis of Data

T-tests were used to test null hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5. Null hypothesis three, concerning differences in responses by grade level, was analyzed by a one-way analysis of variance.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Influences on Socialization

The recurrent interaction between members of the family is of great importance in the development of the personality of its members. The bonds between parents and children are customarily strong within our nuclear family system. The ties between and among siblings will also generally be close.² The relationships of siblings can be identified and are usually overtly expressed. The sex and age differences are of basic importance in the relations of siblings with each other.

The number of siblings a child has and his relationships to them constitute an important aspect of the child's learning situation and hence strongly affect what and how the child learns at home. "More than eighty per cent of American children have siblings."³ In sibling interaction, the child may learn patterns of loyalty, helpfulness, and protection; or conflict, domination, and competition. These patterns may be generalized to other social relationships.

² Ibid., p. 295.

³ Paul H. Mussen, John J. Conger, and Jerome Kagan, Child Development and Personality (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 405.

Smalley states that the relationships of siblings might be described according to the following classifications:⁴

(1) An attitude of jealousy and antagonism sufficiently noted and remarked upon by parents, psychiatrists, or social worker; (2) attitudes involving a relation of dependency in which one child assumes a protective role and a position of authority and superiority unquestioned by the other; (3) an attitude of friendliness in which neither seems to feel superior or antagonistic to an extent which appears unusual to parents, psychiatrists, or social worker.

Buhler feels that in sibling relations, attitudes are usually overtly expressed; cases in which they remain unexpressed and a seemingly neutral attitude prevails are quite symptomatic.⁵

Much of what has been written about the contributions of sibling relationships to child development is more applicable if the children are close in age. Siblings closely spaced may be much more closely associated in a variety of activities, especially if they are of the same sex. It is suggested that children learn differently from slightly older siblings than they do from considerably older siblings or adults.⁶ The skills of a slightly older child are only a little beyond those of the younger one. "Children who are one or two years apart have more common interests and get

⁴ Ruth E. Smalley, "The Influence in Age, Sex and Intelligence in Determining the Attitudes of Siblings Toward One Another," Smith College Studies in Social Work, 1 (June, 1931), p. 26.

⁵ Charolette Buhler, The Child and His Family (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 20.

⁶ James H. S. Bossard and Eleanor S. Boll, The Sociology of Child Development (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 28.

along better than when separated by a great difference in age."⁷
 A 1931 study by Smalley supports this view.⁸ She reported in her study of twenty-seven sibling pairs of two-child families that a friendly attitude between siblings was usually associated with little difference in age or intelligence. With increasing difference in age, friendly attitudes tended to diminish and protective-dependent situations became more common if there was no marked difference in IQ.

"Sometimes siblings are more effective teachers than adults, particularly if youthful skills are involved."⁹ Childhood problems and new situations may be better understood by siblings, in some ways, than by the parents they share. They may serve as role models for one another, especially if the younger observes the older sibling of the same sex. "Older siblings serve as substitutes for the parents in many families."¹⁰

Peer Conformity

Conformity to pressures from peers is seen as a function of age from the pre-adolescent through the adolescent period. There is

⁷ Ernest J. Chave, Personality Development in Children (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 151.

⁸ Smalley, op. cit., p. 39.

⁹ Irish, op. cit., p. 296.

¹⁰ James H. S. Bossard and Eleanor S. Boll, The Large Family System (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), p. 165.

some difference of opinion among authors as to the age when peer conformity begins to decrease. Several studies have been conducted concerning conformity in a parent-peer cross-pressure situation. They are in agreement that, though the adolescent is highly peer-conforming, parental advice is sought in making major choices and decisions. It should be pointed out that research in this area has been of a projective type with the adolescent responding to hypothetical rather than actual situations.

The pre-pubescent and early adolescent periods are times of increased social interaction. As an adolescent encounters new experiences he tends to feel insecure because he is not sure how to cope with his environment.¹¹ As expressed by B. C. Rosen,

The peer group provides the teenager with a sense of belongingness at a time when conflicting loyalties, identifications and values make him unsure of himself. Within the peer group, the adolescent is able to acquire the status often denied him in the adult world -- a status which is more predictable and based upon values and expectations he understands and can fulfill.¹²

Goodman (1969) suggests that overall, the adolescent conforms more to the norms of his friends than to those of his parents or

¹¹ John E. Horrocks, The Psychology of Adolescence (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 240.

¹² B. C. Rosen, "Conflicting Group Membership: A Study of Parent-Peer Group Cross Pressures," American Sociological Review, XX (April, 1955), p. 161.

even his own.¹³ In his study, each adolescent was asked what he expected of himself and what he believed his father, mother, friends, and best-liked teacher expected of him in the three main social roles in an adolescent's life (family role, peer group role, and student role). He was also asked how he and they viewed his actual behavior in relation to their expectations. The adolescent conformed more to the demands of his peers and one or both of his parents than to those of his teachers for the student role, and to his peers for the family role. He conformed more to the norms of his parents' demands for peer role behavior than to his friends' norms. Goodman sees a transitional stage between complete dependence and complete autonomy because of economic, legal, and emotional ties binding the adolescent to his parents, and personal and social ties keeping him extraordinarily sensitive to the demands of his peers.

Solomon, in a study comparing the influences of parents on adolescents' decisions with that from other sources, found that parents were surprisingly uninfluential in each of the four situations presented.¹⁴ Interviewers asked the respondents about various "real" decisions they might have made. After stating the decision, the

¹³ Norman Goodman, "Adolescent Norms and Behavior: Organization and Conformity," Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, XV (April, 1969), p. 207.

¹⁴ David Solomon, "Adolescents' Decisions: A Comparison of Influence from Parents With That of Other Sources," Marriage and Family Living, XXIII, No. 4 (1961), p. 394.

respondents were asked what had been the favored alternative of four possible sources of influence; parents, peers, impulses, and values. What influence the parents did exert in the form of advice had no relationship to the acceptance of that influence, or conformity to the advice.

The results of a study by Costanzo indicate that conformity to pressure from peers is a nonlinear function of age.¹⁵ He hypothesized that from the pre-adolescent to the adolescent period of development, the amount of conformity to external social pressure increased, whereas conformity decreased after adolescence and through early adulthood. This is not in complete agreement with Patel and Gordon who found that conformity decreased from the tenth to the twelfth grade except for some reversals with high prestige suggestions.¹⁶

Bowerman and Kinch studied the trend in relative orientation toward family or peers of students from the fourth through the tenth grades in school.¹⁷ Eighty-one per cent of the fourth graders were family-oriented. In the eighth grade the percentage with family and peer orientation was approximately equal. Only 31.6 per cent

¹⁵ P. R. Costanzo, and M. E. Shaw, "Conformity as a Function of Age Level," Marriage and Family Living, XXXVII (September, 1966), p. 972.

¹⁶ A. A. Patel, and J. E. Gordon, "Some Personal and Situational Determinants of Yielding to Influence," Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, LXI (November, 1960), p. 417.

¹⁷ Charles E. Bowerman, and John W. Kinch, "Changes in Family and Peer Orientation of Children Between the Fourth and Tenth Grades," Social Forces, XXXVII (March, 1959), p. 207.

of the tenth graders were more highly oriented toward family than toward peers. In reporting their study, they point out that there were indications that the pattern of family-peer orientation is much more affected by adjustment to the family than by adjustment to peers; that a lowered orientation toward the family during the adolescent period is not inevitable, but takes place only when a poor adjustment is made to members of the family.

Rosen and Brittain have both cited studies concerning the conformity of adolescents in a cross-pressures situation. Rosen examined conflicting expectations that familial and peer groups have concerning one facet of the adolescents' religious orientation.¹⁸ In cases where the attitudes of the two membership groups were conflicting, the adolescent tended to agree with peers. Brittain found that whether an adolescent will be peer- or parent-conforming in a situation of conflicting parent-peer expectations depended upon the situation given him.¹⁹ When confronted with major choices and decisions, adolescents seek parental opinion or advice rather than that of their peers.

Zentner²⁰, Douvan and Adelson²¹ are in agreement with Brittain

¹⁸ Rosen, op. cit., pp.155-161.

¹⁹ Clay V. Brittain, "Adolescent Choices and Parent-Peer Cross Pressures," American Sociological Review, XXVIII, No. 3 (1963), pp. 385-391.

²⁰ H. Zentner, "Reference Group Behavior Among High School Students," Alberta Journal of Educational Research, X (September, 1964), pp.142-152.

²¹ E. Douvan and J. Adelson, The Adolescent Experience (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 200.

that the influence of "significant others" is taken into account differentially depending upon the specific nature of the decision facing the adolescent.

In a second study by Brittain, reported in 1966, he suggests that for a girl, the development of orientation toward a peer society tended to be a function of the age and sex of her siblings.²² Subjects with older sisters were more peer-conforming and subjects with younger brothers were the least. Brittain is in agreement with Schmuck's earlier finding that birth-order position of the girl is not a statistically significant variable.²³ Schmuck explored birth-order position and sex of sibling to determine the effects of these dimensions on the development of personal tendencies to conform in girls. An analysis of variance indicated that sex of sibling was the only significant variable.

Douvan and Adelson feel that many recent writings on adolescence have overestimated the actual power of peer influence.²⁴ They account for this over-emphasis with several possible reasons. The observer's attention is captured either by the lower-class adolescent who may enter into much publicized gang activity or the upper-middle-class group where parents place a high degree of

²² Clay V. Brittain, "Age and Sex of Siblings and Conformity Toward Parents Versus Peers in Adolescence," Child Development, XXXVII (September, 1966), p. 713.

²³ R. Schmuck, "Sex of Sibling, Birth Order Position, and Female Dispositions to Conform in Two-Child Families," Child Development, XXXIV (December, 1963), pp. 913-918.

²⁴ Douvan and Adelson, op. cit., p. 198.

emphasis on popularity and social success. Another reason for the over-emphasis may be that the adolescent culture has undergone changes in recent years in the direction of increased influences and visibility. Many writers, according to Douvan and Adelson, have exaggerated the extent of these changes.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This study was designed to investigate the influence of sisters and peers in the decision-making of an early adolescent girl. The sample was drawn from classes at the Frankfort Junior High School, Frankfort, Indiana. Frankfort is a town of approximately 18,000 population, forty miles northwest of Indianapolis. It is centered in an agricultural area and supports several industries. The junior high school is a non-consolidated school with approximately 800 students, predominately white. The majority of the students live within the city limits. Consolidated county schools serve the rural population.

Description of the Sample

Students of Frankfort Junior High School in grades seven through nine comprised the sample. The sample was drawn from nine intact classes which enroll girls only. The respondents were grouped by grade level and further according to those who had an older and those who had a younger sister. Those girls who had neither a younger nor an older sister were eliminated from the study. Forty-six respondents were eliminated for this reason. Those with both a younger and an older sister were placed in one

of the other group according to the order in which they ranked the people who most often helped them make decisions. Scores were tabulated for a total of 162 respondents. Of this total, 16.6 per cent lived in a rural area. The distribution of the sample was as follows:

Grade	Number with Sisters older : younger		Total
7	45	: 19	64
8	31	: 20	51
9	<u>29</u>	: <u>18</u>	<u>47</u>
Total	105	57	162

Ages of the seventh grade girls ranged from twelve to fourteen, for eighth grade girls from thirteen to sixteen, and for ninth grade girls from fourteen to seventeen. Mean age of each grade was 12.6, 13.74, and 15.1.

Description of the Instrument

A paper-pencil instrument consisting of twelve situations was employed. Each situation comprised a story in which a girl was required to make a choice between two alternatives in making a decision. One of the alternatives in the situation was favored by the girl's sister; the other alternative was favored by the girl's friends. The subjects were instructed to respond according to what the girl in the situation was more likely to do, not what she should do. It was assumed that the subject would project herself into the position of the girl in the situation and reveal by her response how she would be inclined to respond in a similar situation.

The instrument was an adaptation of the Cross-Pressures Test, an instrument devised by Clay V. Brittain as part of a study entitled "Parents and Peers as Competing Influences in Adolescence."²⁵ Items number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 were adapted, with permission of the author, from the original instrument. Changes were made to make them applicable to early adolescent girls and to sibling influence rather than parental influence. Items number 7, 9, 11, and 12 of the instrument used were composed by the author of this study. The following item taken from the instrument illustrates the structure used.

Sally's friend is having a swimming party on Saturday. The whole gang will be there. That is also the day Sally's neighbor has offered to take Sally and her sister to the State Fair. Both would be fun, but Sally can't decide which she would rather do. She really hates to miss the swimming party, but she has been looking forward to going to the State Fair. Sally's friends are trying to encourage her to go to the swimming party. Her sister will be disappointed if Sally doesn't go to the Fair.

Can you guess what Sally decided to do?

_____ Go to the swimming party

_____ Go to the State Fair

Each of the twelve situations was similar in structure. For purposes of analysis they were subdivided into two groups of

²⁵ Clay V. Brittain, "Parents and Peers as Competing Influences in Adolescence" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1959).

specific types of decisions to be made. Items one through six involved decisions which are of concern to the girl only and are referred to as personal decisions. Items seven through twelve involved decisions which concern not only the girl in the situation, but also the feelings of others. These are referred to as social decisions.

A ten-item question sheet followed the paper-pencil instrument for the purpose of classifying each respondent into one of the six groups previously described and to identify those living in rural or urban areas. (Appendix A, Item 13)

Administration of the Instrument

The instrument was administered by the author to one class at a time. Approximately twenty-five minutes was necessary for completion. After completion, the instruments were sorted, first into grade levels of the respondents and further into groups of those girls having a younger sister and those girls having an older sister. This sorting allowed for the formation of six groups of respondents.

Scoring Technique

On the basis of the alternative selected in making the decision, each item was scored as to a sister-favored or a peer-

avored response. The total of the sister responses was then tabulated. Further, subtotals were tabulated for the specific types of decisions, personal and social.

Statistical Analysis

Null Hypothesis One: There is no difference in the influence from an older sister and from peers on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions. A t-test was used to test the probable influence of older sisters and the probable influence of peers on the total number of situations.

Null Hypothesis Two: There is no difference in the influence exerted by a sister and by peers on an early adolescent girl in making two specific types of decisions, personal and social. A t-test was used to test the probable influence of sisters and the probable influence of peers on the subtotaled responses tabulated for personal and social decisions.

Null Hypothesis Three: There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older sister on girls of different grade levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades). This hypothesis was tested by a one-way analysis of variance with grade level as the variable.

Null Hypothesis Four: There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older and a younger sister on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions. This hypothesis

was tested by means of a t-test between the group having an older sister and the group having a younger sister.

Null Hypothesis Five: There is no difference in the influence of an older sister on an early adolescent girl from an urban area or from a rural area. This hypothesis was tested by means of a t-test.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Scores on a paper-pencil instrument were tabulated for a total of 162 subjects. In each of twelve situations, an early adolescent girl was required to choose between two alternatives in making a decision. One alternative was favored by a sister; the other was favored by peers. Five questions were posed for consideration in this study:

1. Is an early adolescent girl with an older sister more influenced by a sister or by peers in making selected projective decisions?
2. Is the early adolescent girl more influenced by a sister in making certain specific types of decisions and more influenced by her peers in making other specific types of decisions?
3. Is there a difference in the amount of influence exerted by an older sister on girls at different grade levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades)?
4. Does an older sister exert more influence on an early adolescent in making selected projective decisions than does a younger sister?
5. Is an early adolescent girl from a rural area more influenced by her older sister than is an early adolescent girl from an urban area?

There was a significant difference in older sister and peer influence when the items were subdivided into specific types of decisions to be made. At the .01 per cent level of significance, peers had more influence on the early adolescent when making personal decisions, personal decisions being those which are of concern to the girl only. An older sister was more influential when the early adolescent was making social decisions, those concerning not only the girl but also the feelings of others. (Table 1) This finding is in agreement with earlier findings of Zentner²⁶, Brittain²⁷, Douvan and Adelson²⁸ that the influence of "significant others" is taken into account differentially according to the specific nature of the decision to be made.

TABLE 1

MEANS OF SISTER-FAVORED RESPONSES OF GIRLS WITH AN OLDER
SISTER--PROJECTIVE DECISIONS

	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E. of Mean	t
Total decisions	105	6.0095	2.6584	0.2594	0.0366
Personal decisions	105	2.5714	1.6805	0.1640	-2.6130
Social decisions	105	3.4381	1.5500	0.1513	2.8960
t _{.01} , 104 = 1.980					
t _{.05} , 104 = 1.658					
t _{.10} , 104 = 2.620					

²⁶ Zentner, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-152.

²⁷ Clay V. Brittain, "Adolescent Choices and Parent-Peer Cross Pressures," *American Sociological Review*, XXVIII, No. 3 (1963), pp. 385-391.

²⁸ Douvan and Adelson, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

Of the personal decisions, the peers were more influential on all items with the exception of item five concerning which of two boys to go with to a dance. The sister-favored response was chosen by 63.5 per cent of the girls with an older sister on this item. Sisters were more influential in making all social decisions with the exception of item eight concerning how to influence a boy to ask for a date. The girls accepted the older sisters' advice about which of two boys to date, but not about how to get him to ask her.

There is no significant difference in the influence exerted by older sisters and by peers when the total decisions were considered together. (Table 1) When a t-test was used to test this difference it appeared that older sisters and peers were equally influential.

A one-way analysis of variance was used to test the influence of older sisters on girls of different grade levels. Though a difference can be seen in the mean numbers of sister responses of the eleventh, eighth, and ninth grade girls, this difference was not statistically significant at the .10 per cent level of significance. (Table 2)

Bowerman and Kinch²⁹ studied the trend in relative orientation toward family or peers of students from the fourth through the tenth grades in school. They reported that 87.1 per cent of the fourth graders were family-oriented. By the eighth grade the percentage

²⁹ Bowerman and Kinch, op. cit., pp. 206-211.

with family and peer orientation was approximately equal. The mean numbers of sister-favored responses indicate that, for this group, equal orientation to family and peers was evident by the seventh grade level. (Table 2)

TABLE 2

MEANS OF OLDER SISTER-FAVORED PROJECTIVE DECISION RESPONSES
OF GIRLS AT THREE GRADE LEVELS

Grade	Mean	S Dev	N
7	6.333	2.495	45
8	5.452	2.694	31
9	6.103	2.858	29

(F-value given in Appendix B)

Examination of the mean numbers of older sister-favored responses indicates that the eighth grade girls were less sister-conforming than the seventh or ninth. The eighth grade girls were most peer conforming on items 1, 3, 6, and 8. These items concerned which of two boys to go steady with, whether to be in a beauty contest or choose a second alternative, and how to influence a boy to ask for a date.

There was little variation among the girls in the three grades in responding to individual situations. However, seventh grade girls relied on the sister's opinion when deciding which of two dresses to buy while the eighth and ninth graders favored the peers.

In the total sample of fifty-one eighth grade girls, four were completely peer-conforming on all twelve items and none were completely sister-conforming. In contrast, of sixty-four seventh graders, one was completely peer-conforming. Of forty-seven ninth grade girls, one chose all peer responses and two chose all sister responses.

The fourth question posed in the study was whether an older sister exerts more influence on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions than does a younger sister. When data were analyzed by means of a t-test there was no statistically significant difference in the influence of older and younger sisters.

TABLE 3

MEANS OF SISTER-FAVORED PROJECTIVE DECISION RESPONSES
ON TOTAL SCORES OF GIRLS WITH OLDER AND YOUNGER SISTERS

	Mean	S Dev	N	t
Older sister	6.010	2.658	105	-0.0008
Younger sister	6.018	2.295	57	
$t_{.01} = 2.576$ $t_{.05} = 1.960$				

Mean numbers of sister-favored responses were similarly close for the two groups when calculated as to the specific types of decisions, personal and social.

Brittain³⁰, using ninth and tenth grade girls, found that girls with an older sister tended to be more peer-conforming than those with a younger sister or with an older or younger brother. Data given in Table 3 are not supportive of Brittain's finding.

The fifth question posed in the study was concerned with differences in the influence of an older sister on early adolescents from urban and rural areas. Analysis by a t-test showed no statistically significant difference in sister-favored responses of urban and rural girls.

TABLE 4

MEANS OF OLDER SISTER-FAVORED PROJECTIVE DECISION RESPONSES OF GIRLS IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

	Mean	S Dev	N	t
Urban	5.988	2.641	86	0.0297
Rural	6.105	2.807	19	

$t_{.05, 103} = 1.98$
 $t_{.01, 103} = 2.62$

Lack of difference between these two groups could be due to the small number of the sample who lived in a rural area.

The early adolescent girls in this study were more influenced by sisters in making social decisions and more influenced by peers in making personal decisions. This difference in influence was evident at all three grade levels.

³⁰ Clay V. Brittain, "Age and Sex of Siblings and Conformity Toward Parents Versus Peers in Adolescence," Child Development, XXXVII (September, 1966), p. 713.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This study was designed to investigate the influence of sisters and peers in the decision-making of an early adolescent girl. The following null hypotheses were made:

1. There is no difference in the influence on an early adolescent girl from an older sister and from peers in making selected projective decisions.
2. There is no difference in the influence exerted by a sister and by peers on an early adolescent girl in making two specific types of decisions, personal and social.
3. There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older sister on girls of different grade levels (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades).
4. There is no difference in the influence exerted by an older and a younger sister on an early adolescent girl in making selected projective decisions.
5. There is no difference in the influence of an older sister on an early adolescent girl from an urban area or one from a rural area.

A paper-pencil instrument was employed consisting of twelve situations in which a girl must make a choice between two alterna-

tives in making a decision. The respondents were instructed to make their decision according to what the girl in the situation was more likely to do, not what she should do. Six items involved personal decisions, those of concern to the girl only. Six items involved social decisions concerning not only the girl but also the feelings of others. Scores were tabulated for a total of 162 junior high school girls. The subjects were then grouped by grade level and further, according to whether they had an older or a younger sister.

The general findings showed a significant difference between sister and peer influence on specific types of decisions but no significant difference 1) in the influence exerted by sisters and by peers on an early adolescent girl in making the twelve selected projective decisions; 2) in sister influence among seventh, eighth, and ninth grade girls; 3) between the influence of older and younger sisters; and 4) in the influence of sisters on girls who live in urban and rural areas.

Null hypothesis one by means of a t-test resulted in failure to reject this hypothesis. Means of sister-favored responses indicated that sisters and peers were equally influential when the total twelve situations were included in the analysis.

Null hypothesis two was rejected at the .01 per cent level of significance. A t-test revealed that peers were more

influential when the early adolescent girl was making personal decisions and sisters were more influential when social decisions were made. This finding is in agreement with earlier findings of Zentner³¹, Brittain³², Douvan and Adelson³³ that the influence of "significant others" is taken into account differentially according to the specific nature of the decision to be made.

No significant difference was found in the influence of older sisters on girls of different grade levels. A one-way analysis of variance was used, resulting in failure to reject null hypothesis three. Examination of mean numbers of sister-favored responses of girls in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades indicated that the eighth grade girls in this study were more peer conforming than either the seventh or ninth. In a study by Bowerman and Kinch³⁴, orientation to family and peers was approximately equal by the eighth grade. In the present study, equal orientation to family and peers was evident by the seventh grade.

A t-test was used to test null hypothesis four. There was no difference in the influence exerted by older and younger sisters as measured by the test resulting in failure to reject this hypothesis.

³¹ Zentner, op. cit., pp. 142-152.

³² Clay V. Brittain, "Adolescent Choices and Parent-Peer Cross Pressures," American Sociological Review, XXVIII, No. 3 (1963), pp. 385-391.

³³ Douvan and Adelson, op. cit., p. 200.

³⁴ Bowerman and Kinch, op. cit., p. 207.

No significant difference was revealed for null hypothesis five when a t-test was used. Failure to reject this hypothesis indicated that there was no difference in the influence exerted by sisters on girls from urban and rural areas. Lack of difference between these two groups could be due to the small number of the sample who lived in a rural area.

Douvan and Adelson feel that many recent writings on adolescence have overestimated the actual power of peer influence.³⁵ The results of this study imply that though peers are influential in the decision-making of early adolescent girls, they are no more influential than are sisters. The sister influence revealed through the projective situations possibly represents a family value orientation. This seems especially likely since both older and younger sisters were more influential than peers when decisions were made which concerned not only the early adolescent girl but also the feelings of others.

An implication for parents and teachers is that values expressed or taught to a child dealing with situations concerning the feelings of others may be transferred to a sister through advice and opinions given to the sister. Teachers of personal and family relations could emphasize to their students that they are influential in helping sisters make decisions which concern the feeling of others.

³⁵ Douvan and Adelson, op. cit., p. 198.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT

The following stories are about young people like your friends and the people you know. These people are in situations where they are not sure what to do. Read each story carefully and tell me which one of the two things the person is more likely to do. Do not tell what the person should do, but what she is likely to do.

Indicate your answer by making an (X) on the line in front of the decision you choose. Other girls have enjoyed doing this. Hopefully, you will too.

1. For the past several weeks Martha has liked two boys. One of them is Jack and the other is Frank. Jack is good looking and intelligent. He is not especially talkative but can hold up his end of a conversation and is friendly. Frank is in some ways different. He is not especially good looking, but he is more talkative and he has a good sense of humor. He dresses with good taste. Both Frank and Jack have asked Martha to go steady. But she isn't sure which she would rather go steady with -- Frank or Jack. She put them both off about an answer because she can't make up her mind which one she likes better. Martha's sister likes Jack best and thinks Martha should go with him. But that is not the way Martha's friends feel. They like Frank better than Jack. Her friends would rather see Martha go steady with Frank.

Can you guess what Martha decided to do?

_____ Go steady with Frank

_____ Go steady with Jack

2. Jean is thrilled that Kent has asked her to go with him and his family to a concert on Friday evening. She wants to look her very best. After the concert they will stop for something to eat. On Friday afternoon, after school, Jean's two girl friends came home with her to help her get ready. Jean can't make up her mind what to wear. She is undecided between her yellow suit and a pink dress. She isn't sure which makes her look better. Jean's sister came in while she was trying to decide. She thinks that the yellow suit would be just right. Both of Jean's girl friends prefer the pink dress.

Can you guess what Jean decided to wear?

_____ The yellow suit

_____ The pink dress

3. Nancy lives in a town called Oakmont. Each year there is a contest to select "Miss Oakmont." Many clubs and organizations in town enter candidates in the contest and the young lady selected is in a parade and is guest of honor at a banquet. Nancy is very pleased when one of the clubs in town enters her as their candidate for "Miss Oakmont." On the same day that she is entered in the beauty contest, however, she is invited to appear in a talent contest sponsored by a veteran's organization. If selected in this contest, Nancy would go to a nearby city to appear on a television program. The program is on the same day that Miss Oakmont is to be selected and crowned. For this reason, it will be impossible for Nancy to try out for the television program and also be a candidate in the beauty contest. She is very much undecided about which she really wants to do. Her friends think that she should be in the beauty contest rather than trying out for the TV program. Nancy's sister thinks she would have a better chance to win the talent contest. She thinks Nancy should try for the TV program instead of being in the beauty contest.

Can you guess what Nancy decided to do?

_____ Be a candidate in the "Miss Oakmont" contest

_____ Try to be selected for the TV program

4. Mary's birthday is next week. Mary's mother told her that she could pick out a dress that she liked as her birthday present. She has been shopping several times to look for a dress and has brought her choice down to two dresses, but still can't make up her mind which she likes better. Both dresses are in the price range Mary's mother told her she could spend. One dress is a gray wool with a white collar trimmed in lace. The other is a blue knit dress with a red print scarf at the neck. Two of Mary's friends and her sister went shopping with her yesterday. Her sister thinks the blue knit dress looks better on Mary. Her friends say that the gray wool dress is much smarter looking. This afternoon Mary is going back to the store by herself to make a final choice and buy one of the dresses.

Can you guess which dress Mary decided to buy?

_____ The blue knit with the red print scarf

_____ The gray wool with the white lace trimmed collar

5. Next week is the all-school dance at Beth's school. Everyone is getting excited about the dance and the girls are planning what they will wear. Most of the girls have dates for the dance. Beth has a real problem. Two boys have asked to take her to the dance. She doesn't know which one she would rather go with. Both Joe and Dave are popular and good dancers. Joe is a little better looking, but Beth thinks Dave has a better personality. Beth told her closest friends about the problem and they think she should go with Joe. Beth also told her sister about her situation. Beth's sister thinks Beth would have a much better time with Dave.

Can you guess who Beth decided to go to the dance with?

_____ She went to the dance with Joe

_____ She went to the dance with Dave

6. In the fall each year there is a contest to select the beauty queen of the junior high school which Alice attends. Each class in the school enters a candidate in the contest. The girl selected is queen at the homecoming football game. The other girls in the contest serve as the queen's court. Alice is very pleased when her class enters her as their candidate. At the same time she hears that she has been entered in the contest, however, she learns that she has been selected to act as head cheerleader at the homecoming game or be one of the homecoming beauties. Her friends think that she should be a candidate in the beauty contest instead of acting as head cheerleader. But Alice's sister thinks Alice should accept the honor of acting as head cheerleader and withdraw from the beauty contest.

Can you guess what Alice decided to do?

_____ Be a candidate in the beauty contest

_____ Act as head cheerleader at the homecoming game

7. A sweater was reported as missing from a girls' locker at school. Jane is very concerned that someone started a rumor that Karen, a girl in Jane's physical education class took the sweater. Jane and Karen are friendly in class, but not best friends. Jane knows that some rumors are quickly forgotten, but others are not. She wonders whether Karen should know that the others are saying so she will have a chance to clear herself. On the way home from school, Jane talked it over with her closest friend. Her friend thinks she should not say anything and let Karen find out for herself. Jane also talked it over with her sister. Her sister thinks Jane should tell Karen what other people are saying.

Can you guess what Jane decided to do?

_____ She told Karen what people were saying

_____ She didn't say anything to Karen

8. Lou had been going steady for the last several months. Recently she and her boyfriend has a disagreement. Now Lou is trying to get to know some other boys. A club that she belongs to at school is having a party soon. Most of the other girls have dates for the party and Lou would like to have one. She would especially like to go with Bob. Bob was real friendly to Lou a few weeks ago, but she couldn't act interested in him because she was going steady then. Now she is wondering if there is any way she could encourage him to ask her to the party. She has talked it over with her sister and she thinks that since Lou knows Bob very well and since he was interested in her a few weeks ago, it would be all right for Lou to send him an invitation to the party. But her girl friends think it would be better for Lou to mention the party when she is talking to Bob.

Can you guess what Lou decided to do?

_____ Send Bob an invitation to the party

_____ Mention the party to Bob

9. Joyce was very excited when she and her sister received a letter from their cousin inviting them to come to visit her on the farm for a week during their spring vacation. Her cousin has planned several special activities and Joyce knows they will have fun. That same afternoon Joyce's best friend called her and asked her to go on a camping trip with her family. The camping trip will be the same week that Joyce and her sister have been invited to her cousin's. Joyce would like very much to go on the camping trip, but she realizes that she can't go both places. When Joyce talked it over with her parents, they told her that the decision was entirely up to her. Joyce's sister wants Joyce to go to her cousin's and of course her friend is trying to convince her to go on the camping trip.

Can you guess where Joyce decided to spend her vacation?

_____ On the farm with her cousin and sister

_____ On the camping trip with her friend's family

10. Sue has played in the junior high school band for the past two years and is very much interested in music as a career. Each year in her community, the PTA sends two band students to a summer music camp for two weeks and pays their expenses. These students are selected by the band director. He tries to select students who have outstanding music ability and who really want to go to camp. This year Sue wants very much to go to the camp. She wonders if there is anything she could do to get the band director to select her. Her sister has suggested that Sue talk to the band director and tell him she is thinking of continuing in music as a career and ask his advice. She shouldn't mention the music camp -- her sister says. By just talking to the band director he will become better acquainted with her and she might have a better chance of going to the music camp. She has talked to her two closest girl friends about the matter and they think it would be better if Sue would at least mention the music camp while she is talking with the band director.

Can you guess what Sue decided to do?

_____ Ask the band director's advice about continuing with music but not mention the music camp.

_____ Ask the band director's advice about continuing with music and mention the music camp while she is talking to him

11. Sally's friend is having a swimming party on Saturday. The whole gang will be there. That is also the day Sally's neighbor has offered to take Sally and her sister to the State Fair. Both would be fun, but Sally can't decide which she would rather do. She really hates to miss the swimming party, but she has been looking forward to going to the State Fair. Sally's friends are trying to encourage her to go to the swimming party. Her sister will be disappointed if Sally doesn't go to the Fair.

Can you guess what Sally decided to do?

_____ Go to the swimming party

_____ Go to the State Fair

12. Kathy told Mrs. Park, her next door neighbor, that she would babysit on Friday night of next week. Today Kathy remembered that a club she belongs to at school is having a party on that Friday night and she would really like to go. One of her friends, who doesn't belong to the club, volunteered to babysit in Kathy's place. Mrs. Park doesn't know Kathy's friend. Kathy isn't sure how Mrs. Park will feel about this and doesn't know if she should ask if her friend could take her place or not. She doesn't want Mrs. Park to think she is an irresponsible person because she would like to continue sitting for her. Kathy's friends think it would be all right to ask. Kathy's sister thinks she should go ahead and babysit and not even ask if her friend could take her place.

Can you guess what Kathy decided to do?

_____ She asked Mrs. Park if her friend could take her place

_____ She decided to babysit

13.

1. What grade are you in? _____ 1.
2. What is your age? _____ 2.
3. How many brothers do you have? _____ 3.
4. How many of them are older than you? _____ 4.
5. How many of them are younger than you? _____ 5.
6. How many sisters do you have? _____ 6.
7. How many of them are older than you? _____ 7.
8. How many of them are younger than you? _____ 8.
9. Do you live inside or outside the city limits? _____ 9.
10. Who helps you make decisions when you can't decide what to do?
Rank the following people from 1 to 7 starting with the person who most often helps you make decisions.

Father	_____
Mother	_____
Older Brother	_____
Younger Brother	_____
Older Sister	_____
Younger Sister	_____
Friend	_____

APPENDIX B

F-VALUE

TABLE I

F-VALUE OF MEAN SQUARES OF SISTER-FAVORED RESPONSES OF
GIRLS WITH AN OLDER SISTER AT THREE GRADE LEVELS

	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F
Grade	14.6187	2	7.3093	1.0350
Error	720.3655	102	7.0624	
Total	734.9841	104		

$F_{.10, 2, 102} = 2.35$

$F_{.05, 2, 102} = 3.07$

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