MARRIED STUDENTS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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by
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MARRIED STUDENTS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Approved by Committee:

Chairman

Dean of the Graduate Division

Regarding Married Students Attending Secondary Schools

Policies: Advocated and Actions Taken by Representative School Boards and Administrators in the United States

Legal Aspects and Educational Practices Favorable schools Condition schools Policies regarding pregnancy
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The belief of the investigator was that if the family of today and tomorrow is to meet such a challenge, the greatest care possible must be exercised in the formation of these families. Marriage, itself, then must be contemplated only by those individuals who are mature enough to realize the significance of their duties as future parents and homemakers. For the strength of our nation rests not only in scientific advances, but in the decent homes and worthwhile communities we must strive to establish.

Such a philosophy was further expounded by President Eisenhower in his recent speech that opened the White House Conference on Youth and Children, when he affirmed:

CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the family is the reservoir of democracy. More accurately, one must affirm that the family can be and must be such a reservoir. The family is what we make it. . . . The family of the future will be made by our generation. If we can recognize now that democratic family living, and by that token democracy, itself, depends upon how children are nurtured and socialized by the family, we can get some glimpse of the importance of our task. . . . There are unlimited opportunities ahead in family life for creation of a better culture, and a more livable society, if we foster sane, integrated personalities. . . . This is the supreme challenge in a world of change and promise. 1

The belief of the investigator was that if the family of today and tomorrow is to fulfill such a challenge, the greatest care possible must be exercised in the formation of these families. Marriage, itself, then must be contemplated only by those individuals who are mature enough to realize the significance of their duties as future parents and homemakers. For the strength of our nation rests not only in scientific advances, but in the decent homes and worthwhile communities we must strive to establish.

Such a philosophy was further expounded by President Eisenhower in his recent speech that opened the White House Conference on Youth and Children, when he affirmed:

I have an unshakable faith in the overwhelming majority of fine, earnest, high-spirited youngsters who comprise this rising generation of Americans. They are wise for their years, and are fast learning the relationship between physical and mental fitness on the one hand, and satisfaction in accomplishment on the other. We strive to make certain that the number of failures is held to a minimum. In this effort we have developed appropriate programs. . . physical, recreational, educational, psychological, and occupational. For all these the surest and best foundation is a happy family; one that finds its greatest enjoyment in such things as the family picnic, the 'cook-out,' or the home movies. . . .

The president elaborated upon the life-of-ease and cultural opportunities enjoyed by young people today, but made it clear that those things were not the true essence of civilization. He maintained that:

Civilization is a matter of spirit; of convictions and belief; of self-reliance and acceptance of responsibility; of happiness in constructive work and service; of devotion to valued tradition. It is a religious faith; it is a shared attitude toward life and living, which is felt and practiced by a whole people, into which each generation is born. . . and nurtured through childhood to maturity.

The president concluded his speech by stressing the importance of the task facing the leaders of our nation's youth. He told them:

In the first place, you are working with the most precious resource of our nation. . . its children.

Secondly, this process of preparation for tomorrow's leadership grows increasingly difficult as rapid and momentous changes alter the look of tomorrow's world.

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1 Associated Press Release to Des Moines Register, March 28, 1960, pp. 1, 4.
2 Ibid.
Finally, your mission is important... because within this great context of change and accommodation there are certain imperishable values which must neither be changed nor abandoned.  

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) whether the problem of marriage in high school was serious and prevalent enough to merit the nationwide attention and action of leading educators and sociologists; and (2) if so, to discover the reasons behind an early marriage trend, and to find what steps have been taken and can be taken to alleviate the situation.

An attempt was made to determine if these high school boys and girls who are entering the adult world of marriage and parenthood are ready and adequately trained to accept the serious responsibilities that such a step involves.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Paul Popeneoe, of the American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles, predicted that 25 per cent of the 1958 high school graduates would be married within four months from the time they get their diplomas.  

This presents a perplexing problem of dating, courtship, and marriage, as it occurs in the United States.  

1Ibid.

national trend. Marriages of young people between the ages of fourteen and nineteen have been on a rise for over half a century. In fact, young people in the United States marry earlier than those of almost any other country in the Western World; the average age at marriage being eighteen to nineteen years for women, and twenty-one to twenty-two years for men.¹

III. PROCEDURE

This study was based mainly upon descriptive research; and used the data-gathering device of document or content analysis. The first section dealt with a review of the literature using two general groups of sources. The one source was books on dating, courtship, romantic love, marriage, the family, and other related aspects. The other source was articles published in periodicals; publications of the government, learned societies, and other organizations; and newspapers, within the past five years, dealing with teen-age marriages.

Under the heading, "Review of the Literature," there was first a survey of the vital statistics concerning early marriages, with additional comments based upon these statistics. Next, the investigator presented a summary of reports of dating, courtship, and marriage, as it occurs in the United States today, along with a related report on romantic love and

sex, in an effort to show how well high school students or teen-agers fit into these various phases of emotional development.

Thirdly, there was an investigation as to why students marry while still in high school or shortly after graduation, including some case histories with resultant views gained from experience. There were also stated opinions of high school student leaders, administrators, parents, welfare workers, and sociologists, with regard to the reasons behind young marriages, the advisability of such marriages, and what should be done about the situation. In conclusion there was a report on the implications drawn from the success or failure of marriages involving high school students or teen-agers.

The second section dealt with the presentation of data. This information covered the actions taken and the policies advocated by representative school boards and school administrators throughout the United States. There was also a presentation of the problems that confronted school administrators with regard to married students, and how such problems, if any, could be solved. As a supplement to this study a letter of inquiry was sent to twenty-six representative Iowa High Schools with enrollments over three hundred.

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There has been an influx of worthwhile and reliable literature published within the past five years in regard to marriages in secondary schools.

I. EARLY MARRIAGE STATISTICS

Right now in the United States there are more than a million husbands and wives still in their teens. This trend to early marriages got its big impetus by World War II, but instead of settling back to the norm, has accelerated, and from all appearances, will continue to do so. This trend is no "flash-in-the-pan" phenomenon. It seems, in this era of earlier and earlier maturing, of "going steady" at increasingly earlier ages, and of unprecedented prosperity, to be here to stay.\(^1\) The investigator found an ample number of rather startling statistics which verified this trend.

For years the average age at the time of a first marriage has been declining. The average age for women to marry has dropped from twenty-two years in 1890 to twenty-one-tenth years in 1956. The average age for men to marry has dropped from twenty-six and one-tenth years in 1890 to twenty-three and two-tenths years in 1956. In 1890, there were 5

per cent of the married men, and over 9 per cent of the married women who were under twenty. By 1951, there were 2 per cent of the married men and over 13 per cent of the married women who were under twenty.¹

In 1950 there were 109,560 teen-age individuals fourteen to sixteen years who were or had been married; there were 457,580 seventeen and eighteen year-olds who were or had been married. Forty-five per cent of the girls who left high school were either married or soon expected to be married.² In 1956, there were approximately 12,000 married males and 284,000 married females under the age of eighteen. Furthermore, by the age of eighteen, some 12,500 to 15,000 additional young people (mostly girls) had become either widowed or divorced.³

The Bureau of Census estimated that in 1957 about 2 per cent of the boys and 14 per cent of the girls in the United States, between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, were married.⁴ In 1958, one-fourth of all brides were girls of eighteen. The situation was clarified still further by stating that


³Harold T. Christensen, "Why All These Young Marriages?" National Parent-Teacher, LII (April, 1958), 4-6.

⁴Lantogne, loc. cit.
one seventeen year old girl out of eight was married.

The trend was also upheld by some regional statistics. In California in 1954, 90 per cent of the 205 senior high schools had one or more student marriages during the previous year; this affected 2,044 girls and 220 boys. Among students in California in 1956, over 2 per cent of the sophomore class of girls, 4 per cent of the junior class of girls, and over 5 per cent of the senior class of girls were married. Nearly three-fourths of the girls dropped out of school following their marriage. 2

In Omaha in the fall of 1959, Assistant Superintendent Don Warner stated,

From June, 1957, to June, 1958, eighty youngsters quit school because of marriages. This year twenty-one married students are attending high school; a small number when compared with our total of 10,490 students, . . . But teen-age marriages are a major concern. 3

Several Iowa high school superintendents and principals expressed some pertinent ideas concerning the early marriage trend. Kenneth Stephenson, Principal of Oskaloosa High School, said,

High school marriages are on the increase, there's no question about it. We're naturally worried, because

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1 Ibid. 2 Christensen, loc. cit.
the whole trend of youngsters feeling that they know all the answers at sixteen and seventeen is of considerable concern to everyone.1

The superintendent of schools at New London, Clifford McKee, said:

"I'm not opposed to young marriages, if the boy and girl really love each other. But the thing I'm opposed to is, if we keep letting them get married younger and younger, we're going to have more poor marriages.2"

"Plentiful jobs and easy credit may figure in increasing teen-age marriages," according to Melvin Bowen, principal of Lincoln High School in Des Moines. He went on to say:

"I'm not disturbed over it as a high school principal. Circumstances alter cases. Sometimes mature, precocious youngsters marry earlier because their minds are made up. However as parents and school people, we have to watch out that we don't let our children grow up too soon. If they wear long dresses, high heels and corsages too early, have parties at the country club and keep late hours too early, it takes a lot out of adult life.3"

In the spring of 1956, at Central High of Charlotte, North Carolina, a few outstanding students eloped and started a schoolwide fad. It ended with over 3 per cent of the student body married, and a squabble developed that threatened to tear the school apart. When school bells turned to wedding bells, there were many bickering factions and school morale suffered. In March of 1957, the alert principal, Sanders, called a meeting to hear all views on the subject. Some of

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.
the views expressed were:

Sheena Warren, seventeen, Service Club President:
I know how much these girls are missing. All the fun is here and the married students over there. You see married kids in the hall and you wonder: does she get her lunch money from her husband or her daddy? I don't think the marriages in school had any thought behind them. And they surely didn't have school interests in mind, so why should they still be going to school. I don't believe they should be allowed.1

Joe Hill, seventeen, Student Council President: I don't think students should be persecuted for getting married and I certainly disagree with the girls' clubs that don't allow married members. I don't think their ban discouraged marriage. My girl and I talk about marriage all the time. We haven't got the money to be married now and anyway, we're 'chicken.' We're scared of our parents. I think if people get married in high school they should accept the responsibility and support themselves. Being together is about the only advantage in marriage, and we're together practically all the time anyway. But if a college career is impossible, and a boy has to work anyway, I just don't see anything wrong with marriage in high school.2

Elizabeth Gullidge, seventeen, President of Girls Good Sports: I'm against teen-age marriages. A person isn't mature enough in high school to know what it's all about. A boy needs a college education before he can make enough money to support a wife and family. A girl who is married, her interests change. She has to take her time working, ironing, and taking care of a house. She doesn't have time for the service projects, parties, sock hops, and all we do.3

This airing of opinions clarified the atmosphere, and all concerned began to feel better about the unwholesome situation that had developed. By May, a wedding ring provoked sympathy instead of congratulations. Also, the different

1Ibid. 2Ibid. 3Ibid.

troubles of some of the newlyweds seemed to have a sobering effect upon the rest of the student body. Thus ended the marriage boom and resulting controversy at one typical high school.  

As Sanders, the principal of Central High, emphasized:

"Kids don't want to be told what to do, but they look to you for direction. The fault is in not giving it." The parents' part in remedying the problem was summed up by the President of the Parents' League, Mrs. Jane Berkeley, Jr., when she stressed the following points:

We think our children are growing up too fast and we believe generally in slowing down the social pace. One way to slow down the early marriages is to slow down the younger graders. When we started, little girls were dressing up, wearing corsages, and all that silly stuff. Now the sixth grade girls are interested in their studies and not in dancing, and the boys want to climb trees and go boy-scouting. We seem to have slowed the pace, and the kids are enjoying their childhood more, and appear to have accepted the change pretty well.  

The picture presented of these early marriages is not just one of radiant school children showing off wedding bands to friends, but also one of crowded homes, with worried and sad in-laws moving over to make room. Even more prosaically, the marriage figures evoke the gloomier picture of disillusion,
and heartbreak; for a great many of these ill-prepared unions go on the rocks, legally, financially, or emotionally. Even where they succeed, something has to give; usually it is education, and with it goes the chance, not merely for immediate higher earning power, but more wastefully, for personal fulfillment.

Still other regional statistics revealed the presence of an early marriage trend in several states, but the trend was not as evident or accelerated as it was found to be in certain isolated areas.

Wilson H. Ivins' study of student marriages in New Mexico secondary schools in grades seven through twelve for the school year 1952-53 showed the over-all marriage rate to be low except in the twelfth grade and most marriages were confined to girls in the upper three grades. It was significant, however, that sixty girls in grades seven, eight, and nine were married. From seventy-five returned questionnaires representing over half of the public secondary schools in the state and an even greater proportion of the secondary school population, 378 students were reported as married. The total enrollment represented by the returned questionnaires was approximately 25,000; thus, about 2 per cent of the students in the six grades surveyed were married. Approximately

1 Ibid.

3 per cent of the sophomores, 4 per cent of the juniors, and 8 per cent of the seniors were married.1

Ruth Schonle Cavan and Grace Beling reported from a survey of high schools in Illinois cities of over 10,000 on the frequency of marriage and the policies and practices related to married students. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 58 per cent of the 145 schools contacted. The percentage of married high school students was small; girls outnumbered boys seven to one. Of the eighty-four questionnaires returned, sixty schools had one or more marriages during the school year 1956-7. Among girls in those schools, 1 per cent of the sophomores, 2 per cent of the juniors, and 4 per cent of the seniors were married.2

In 1958 it was disclosed at the National Council on Family Relations that a study of early marriages in Nebraska showed 10 per cent of the girls in twelve selected counties were eighteen years of age or younger when married in 1940 as compared to 21 per cent who were eighteen years of age or younger when married in 1950. Comparable figures for men indicated an increase from .5 per cent to 3 per cent during the same period.


the same period. In Oregon, a survey based upon discussions and correspondence with teachers and administrators in twenty-seven schools revealed that probably three-fourths of that state's high schools had married students. One school had thirty-eight married students in a total enrollment of twelve hundred. Many of these marriages involved high school girls and older out-of-school men. There were very few high school couples as such.

Superintendents and principals in North Carolina believed that the addition of the twelfth grade as a requirement for graduation has had an effect on the married student population in the secondary schools of that state. Previously, many young persons were married immediately following graduation from the eleventh grade whereas now, at the same age, they marry and return to the senior year of high school.

In 1954, 14 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls ages fourteen to seventeen in the United States were married. Kirkendall described this situation as follows:

A nationwide survey showed that about 3 per cent of the students in grades ten through twelve were married

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2 Lester A. Kirkendall, "Now It's Marriage in the High Schools," *Oregon Educational Journal*, XXVI (September, 1951),

while still in school. This is no new problem: only the circumstances are different. Formerly they married and left school or married immediately after graduation.

II. DEFINITIONS PERTAINING TO THE EMOTIONS

The need for an understanding of the true essence of marriage was illustrated by home-economics teacher, Mildred H. Snowberger, whose class of senior girls was indignant when she asked which of the factors--education, family background, religion, or economic status--they considered most important in building good marriages and why? She had not mentioned "love," and to them it was the only thing that mattered; if you were "in love" all the other things would work out.

Experts agree that many teen-age marriages would never occur if the boy and girl fully understood the scope of what they were letting themselves in for; and also if they were familiar with the true meaning of marriage and all that such a state involves, including an awareness of the purpose of the different phases leading up to marriage. Thus an explanation or description of those phases was in order, with Dating being the initial phase to be examined.

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2. Snowberger, loc. cit.
Our cultural social patterns define dating as a recognized form of social relationship in which, by following the rules, the person will not become invoked in a painful experience. However, the rules are not always clearly understood by all the parties, and some people find it difficult to follow all the rules. Sexual satisfaction is not the primary aim of the date. A girl loses prestige if she is too strict or too yielding. She must encourage yet repulse his advances; the important goal is to gain mutual self-esteem.

When the Purdue Opinion Poll for Young People asked the question: "Shall high school students go steady?" 42 per cent answered "yes," 35 per cent said "no," and 23 per cent were undecided. The Poll also revealed that 48 per cent of the boys and 39 per cent of the girls in high school seldom dated.

Some reasons that favored steady dating in high school were: (1) you know where your next date is coming from; and (2) you have a close friend with whom you can relax, act yourself, and share ideas and activities. The reasons that frowned upon steady dating in high school were: (1) you are

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2. Ibid., p. 75.
3. Landis, op. cit., pp. 11-15. 4. Ibid.
often cheating yourself of other enjoyable friendships; (2) if the relationship breaks up after a long period, you have probably lost contact with others and it is hard to get back into circulation; (3) there is the danger of marrying without knowing others, one of whom might make a better mate; and (4) there is the temptation to marry too young.¹

In high school, boys may be eager to date the prettiest or most popular girl; later on, the qualities of consideration, sincerity, and compatibility will seem more important. High school students need to date as many of the opposite sex as possible as a basis for comparison. This will familiarize them with the great variety of human nature that does exist, and they will realize that they can like many different people--each one for different reasons.

Dating is not true courtship; it is a sort of d'alliance relationship. Dating is largely dominated by the quest of the thrill, and is regarded as an amusement.² The date is a characteristic American phenomenon, conducted on a characteristically epic scale, and with a zest not found in any other country.³ Dating is a relationship carried on for its

¹Ibid.


own sake. Courtship has an ulterior purpose, the ancient and honorable purpose of matrimony, but dating is just fun.¹

Of course this dating phase in our society contributes its existence to Sex Attraction, which was described by Paul Landis, Professor of Sociology and Rural Sociologist at the State College of Washington, as "the physical or biological pull we feel toward a member of the opposite sex after we reach the age of adolescence." He goes on to explain that this "attraction" is a feeling that all creatures experience, and is a prerequisite to mating and having offspring.²

But when does this "sex attraction" cease to be just give and take friendship and become something more serious?

The romanticist, Ira S. Wile, answered that question by contending that "Romantic Love strikes like a bolt from the blue." He also stated that:

'Love at first sight,' is the signal for serious courtship to begin. This phenomenon involves a quick recognition that one individual is actually beloved because that person seemingly fits the clarified, though often unconscious, ideals of another being. . . . In a sense, 'love at first sight,' frequently means that one or both of the lovers are physically prepared and have been awaiting, if not anticipating, the appearance of the right partner. This has been produced by verbal assurances of family, friends, movies, songs, and literature.³

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¹Merrill, op. cit., p. 62.

²Landis, op. cit., p. 43.

At this stage in the study of love emotions, it seemed necessary to introduce the word, More. Old-time or formal mores can no longer apply to present day courtship practices. There is a disparity between traditional mores and actual courtship codes. Kinsey had some thought-provoking statements pertaining to mores.

Sexual mores are almost completely inculcated in the human male by the age of sixteen. Group expectations become an intimate part of a personality. He can, to be sure, consciously violate the taboos of youth, home, and family. But he is always violating something, flaunting something, or denying something; this something is the pattern of sexual conventions that a part of his personality as a participant in American culture.

The investigator was forced to conclude from the evidence presented that romantic love is not innate; that the people involved act as they do because they have been taught that way. The whole conception of romantic love in the minds of young people and all others in society today, is formulated by a cultural pattern; and in its ideal form, assumes the choice of one individual out of all possible individuals. This same cultural pattern forms the background for Courtship procedures accepted today.

And just what were the conceptions of courtship as defined by the various writers? Burgess and Locke said,

"Courtship includes all forms of behavior by which a man seeks to win the consent of a woman for marriage." Waller stated that, "Courtship is the process of forming a family . . . the bridge between the life of the child in the parental family, and the life of the adult in his own family."

Kinsey's ideas on courtship were as follows:

Courtship is an interval when two ardent young people are mutually attracted but are constrained by convention from consummating the attraction. Courtship is a relationship of unstable equilibrium that must end one way or the other; either in conflict and disruption or in marital fulfillment. Courtship is a period when romantic infatuation is at its height and the exploration of two strange personalities presents endless exciting possibilities. Courtship is therefore a time of tension.¹

The status of two individuals in the throes of courtship was most aptly described by André Maurois, in his book, Seven Faces of Love, when he said that,

The romantic illusion created in the mind of the lover is such that even his best friend cannot understand his conduct. While under this spell, the lover lies in a schizoid world of his own, with its own private standards.²

All writers agree that romantic love is based upon emotional monopoly; competition cannot be tolerated. Merrill described romantic love as "a sort of socially approved temporary insanity; the more 'madly in love' the participants, the greater is the social approval of their activities."

¹Ibid.
Before any further exploration of the romantic stages, it became necessary to define **Sex**, itself, so that its relationship to romantic love would be clarified. According to the theory advanced by Merrill, sex is an organic impulse whose principal aim is the disappearance of a physical tension. It is a natural impulse shared by men and beasts.

Stripped to its elemental terms, sex is not tender, loving and solicitous, but selfish. . . consumed with the release of one's own tensions, not happiness of others.  

Kinsey pointed out the danger that existed in the release of these physical tensions at too early an age, when he emphasized that:

> Romance itself, is a partial product of the repression of these sexual impulses. However, an indeterminate number of modern young people have adopted a policy of sexual *laissez faire* before marriage, with the result that many of the former tensions associated with romantic love have disappeared. Thus, romantic love itself may be jeopardized if the present trend towards premarital intimacy continues.

Sex and affection are not synonymous. Although love and companionship often make for a more satisfactory sex life, it is possible for couples to adjust sexually without adjusting in other intimate aspects of married life.  

At this point in the discussion it became desirable to determine the status of romantic love in *Marriage*.

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1 *Merrill, op. cit.*, p. 144.  
2 *Kinsey, loc. cit.*  
3 *Merrill, op. cit.*, p. 142.
Insofar as romantic love is concerned, much of the ultimate success of marriage depends upon the ability of the couple to accept gracefully its unromantic quality and bridge the gap between romantic love and Conjugal Affection. A successful marriage loses the rapture of romance, but it gains something more precious in return. Conjugal affection, not romantic love, constitutes the permanent basis of a successful marriage; when a vision of an erstwhile Goddess and delightful creature, becomes a reality of an ordinary woman with faults, foibles, and temperamental quirks.¹

However, as Merrill stressed,

Romantic love sets the stage for the 'great adventure,' and is the principal prerequisite to marriage in the United States. Courtship and marriage without romance are considered unthinkable, ridiculous, and a little immoral.²

The marriage ceremony itself, was described by Kinsey as,

A kind of social mountain pass which the young people have reached after surmounting many (real and imaginary) barriers on the way. On the other side of the pass, lie the green and pleasant pastures of marital harmony.³

Marriage becomes the time for the release of tensions. Although the honeymoon and early months of marriage retain some of the high, careless rapture of courtship, this ecstasy cannot continue indefinitely. This fact was well illustrated

by Walter Lippman, in *A Preface to Morals*, when he said, "Lovers who have nothing to do but love should not be envied."

The old saying that "like attracts unlike" as applied to social background, has not stood the test of scientific investigation. The more alike the couple is in social and recreational interests, in economic and religious background, and in moral standards, the greater the probability of their success in marriage. The happiness of a married couple can be increased if they: increase their common activities, strive to understand each other, accept and tolerate each other's differences, share common experiences and common memories, and develop consideration; in short, if they apply all the good rules of friendship and fellowship.

The former Executive Secretary of the National Council on Family Relations, Evelyn Duvall, explained that: "Building a marriage means building a common way of life; eating, sleeping, playing, spending, earning, loving, living... all shared in marriage."

As a general rule, high school students or teen-agers do not know how to practice the first principles of living and sharing unselfishly. Young people need to be made aware of the extensive and oft-times trying duties of conscientious homemakers and wage-earners. It is this facing of

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1Ibid., p. 93.  2Ibid., pp. 148-150.  
3Merrill, op. cit., p. 95.
responsibility and sharing of life together which make the road to happiness in marriage. Some young people are ready and willing to tackle the above task, and in such cases, the right age for marriage becomes an individual problem, having less to do with birthdays and more to do with emotional maturity.¹

III. REASONS WHY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS MARRY

The school was a big one in a moderate-sized American town. The principal was typical of most of the puzzled administrators who are worrying over what seems to be an increasing number of teen-age marriages. Some of his chief laments were:

Students start going steady when they're thirteen, and during high school most of the girls are wearing a boy's ring on a necklace. If they aren't officially engaged by the end of their senior year, they think their life's ruined. . . . We've had a lot of conferences about it in the educational field and we're beginning to work out some theories. . . .

First of all, we think that our contemporary culture stimulates romantic and sexual interests and glamorizes marriage. This leads to early and steady dating, and that in turn can lead to emotional and sexual involvement, and early marriage.

Some educators think the early marriages are a reflection of the insecurities of our times. 'Having less to cling to in the culture, they cling more to each other.' Some girls who marry young come from insecure and unhappy homes and seem to look upon marriage as an escape. Due to the economic prosperity which exists, parents can afford to contribute to the support of married children.

These students are all individuals, and they all seem to have their own private and important reasons for getting married before they finish school. Here's what they say:

¹ Byrd, op. cit., p. 21.
'I didn't like school at all!' 
'Dad criticized me all the time!' 
'Mother was always busy with other things!' 
'We couldn't wait to belong to each other!' 
'Let's face it, I had to get married!' 

Abraham Stone, veteran marriage counselor and Vice-President of the Planned Parenthood Foundation, said, 

Youngsters want to grasp what little security they can in a world gone frighteningly insecure. The youngsters feel they will cultivate the one security that's possible—their own gardens, their own human relationships, and their own homes and families. 

This idea was elaborated upon by William Cole, Chairman of the Department of Religion and Dean of Freshmen at Williams College, when he said: 

It is the lack of really satisfying relationships in present-day homes that impels teen-agers into deep attachments outside their homes. These young people are looking for a combination of a parent, supporter, confessor, bulwark, and a source of unquestioning warmth and affection. The 'playing the field' kind of dating they attempt at a certain age doesn't fill the bill. If they are unable to find the answer at home, they will turn elsewhere...to another teen-ager to fill this void and need in their lives. 

Also, another reason for earlier marriages is the philosophy that "everybody's doing it." When a good percentage of the girls in a high school graduating class or a college freshman or sophomore class are "pinned," engaged, or just about to be married, it takes some strength of 

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1Parton, loc. cit.  
2Gilman, loc. cit.  
3Ibid.
character, some real balance and self-confidence, not to feel that one is being passed by and over. . . that the bloom is fading fast, and that something had better be done about it.  

Cole continued,

Teen-agers view with detachment or suspicion goals and goods their parents found worthwhile, (such as to fight for a cause; to aspire to something unattainable, but shining; and to climb, rung by painful rung, the ladder to 'success.') These young people have no faith in yesterday's ideals or idols; the pursuit of success so sought after by their parents, is apt to be called a 'rat-race.' With no faith in the future, either, this generation finds its one remaining sense of meaningfulness in marriage and a home.  

Margaret Mead warned that, "Any career which requires dedication, long-time work and responsibility to a wider whole, simply does not appeal to teen-agers." In support of this theory were studies indicating that early and steady dating were definitely associated with earlier marriages. This association may occur because many young people feel they have exhausted the other available avenues for new adventure and have nothing left to do except to get married.  

Sometimes a teen-age marriage is motivated by the young people's desire to force their parents to treat them as adults. A married person is no longer under his parents' control; they can't "make" him do anything. Where relations with the parents are not as desirable as early marriage, persistent efforts may force the parents to accept the marriage.  

1Ibid.  
2Ibid.  
3Samuel Grafton, "Why Teen-age Marriages Are Falling Apart," McCall's, LXXXVII (November, 1959), 120.  
4Elizabeth N. Klein, "What to Do for Alter-Bound Teen-agers?", Youthman (June, 1950), 21.
are bad, a boy (or girl) may hope that marriage will serve as a jolt, compelling the parents to look at him in a new light and "treat him better." Marriage thus becomes a symbol of adulthood and freedom. This would seem to suggest that poor relations with parents are a cause of teen-age marriage. They are. Recent studies showed that persons who marry in their teens have had, on the whole, a less satisfying relationship with their parents than those who marry later.¹

However, this belief was contradicted by M. Elizabeth King, minister of the Leonardsburg, Ohio, Methodist Church, with fourteen years of experience working in probate and juvenile courts when she refuted the myth that teen-agers are marrying too young because they lack love, security, and home life. She contended:  

If this were true, then once having acquired the unity and security of love and home in marriage, these teens would not so blithely discard them through divorce. Further, my experience both in court and as a minister in a farm community has not convinced me that children from broken or problem homes are more likely to get married at an early age.  

Every normal youngster goes through a period of feeling unloved, neglected and unwanted. This period takes firm, wise handling on the part of parents and may also require help from friends, teachers, pastors, and grandparents. It passes, as do young love affairs. The tragedy is that these love affairs are not accepted as a part of the process of change from childhood to youth. Rather, parents too often regard them as indications of precocious adulthood. Too early dating is without question the major cause of too early marriages.²

¹Ibid., p. 121.

²Elizabeth M. King, "What to Do for Altar-Bound Teenagers?", Together (June, 1960), 21.
After a boy and girl of high-school age have announced their intention of getting married, it is probably too late to get them to see why they should wait until they are older. For that reason, it is highly desirable to make them aware of the pitfalls of teen-age matrimony as early as possible, before they get too serious about each other. Such was the opinion of John B. Oman, pastor of the Wesley Methodist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, who stated, "Girls and boys just naturally take on their parents' way of looking at life. Thus, a teen-ager's attitude toward marriage is more caught than taught." He went on to say,

Psychologically speaking, the most secure children are those whose parents have set consistent limits. However, to impose unexpected and unexperienced limits on a high school student who announces, 'Jim and I are going to get married next month,' may give her a resentment toward authority which could do more harm to her lifelong happiness than becoming a teen-age bride.¹

At this point the investigator felt that it would be both desirable and enlightening to present two specific and contrasting case histories, hoping to further reveal prevailing attitudes, reasons, and consequences attributed to marriages involving high school students.

Laura was seventeen, curls, blue eyes, freckles, smiling. . . had to get married to Hank, who's in the Army. . . we're both terribly happy about the baby. . . were planning to get married anyway when Hank got out of Army. . . She grew up in close family, father a salesman, mother 'full of fun,' just wonderful; nothing my brother, sis and I couldn't talk over with her. . .

¹John B. Oman, "What to Do for Altar-Bound Teen-agers," Together (June, 1960), 20.
a perfectly normal, happy childhood. . . didn't like high school, full of cliques. . . but fairly popular and did well in studies. . . met Hank in November of her junior year, going steady by December. . . he'd been married and divorced. . . Mother had always told me about sex, but when you're in love you forget your mother's warnings. . . My dad treated me like his favorite daughter, and bride, and then like a mother-to-be. . . Everything has been just fine with us, sex life perfect, and we get along beautifully with my family. . . The money seems to be working out too. . . $200 saved when we got married. . . Hank gets $203 from Army. . . apartment $95 a month. . . no car, buses run by. . . old T.V. set of mom's. . . When Hank gets out of Army, going to move back to his home state. . . job with oil company waiting for him. . . Maybe sometime, Laura could go to commercial art school and finish high school. . . 'I don't care where I live as long as I'm with Hank, and he's happy. After all, he's the one I have to think of. . . he's my husband.'1

The above story will possibly have a happy ending but chances are not so promising that this next couple will have

a bright future.

Sherry was a slim young lady, red hair. . . . She and baby son live with parents in good part of town. . . eighteen now. . . married when sixteen. . . had a baby and divorce by seventeen. . . 'I don't think I want to marry again for at least ten years, and then just to give my baby a father. . . . We were both just too young! . . . Please tell other girls not to get married in their teens; they just don't have the maturity. . . . Even if you think you're truly in love, it's better to wait. . . . At least that's what I found out. . . . She was a sophomore and Clark a senior. . . he then entered a nearby college. . . they got married. . . all seemed sensible; she finish high school and then college. . . Clark work in spare time to support us. . . . His mother paid downpayment on a darling little house. . . got pregnant on honeymoon. . . Clark seemed to change completely. . . fights over sex. . . . He stepped out with other girls . . . accused her of unfaithfulness. . . told him 'to get out'. . . he begged to come back. . . but too late. . . . Sherry going on to college and be a history teacher. . . mother taking care of baby. . . Clark is drinking heavy. . . failing college. . . . 'I won't get married again in a hurry!'2

1 Parton, loc. cit. 2 Ibid.
"Teen-agers do not, usually, look beyond the wedding day. They are terribly romantic," said a caseworker of the Family and Children's Services of Greater St. Louis. "Everything is like a storybook to them. They believe people marry and live happily ever after." Another social worker said, "They have a vague dream of living in an idyllic, pastel-walled apartment and of giving each other breakfast in bed simultaneously for the rest of their lives."

They feel that the mere act of getting married makes them adults. "But they remain teen-agers," stated a social worker from nearby Clayton, Missouri. "They can't really communicate with each other. Communication requires maturity."¹

As conclusive evidence, University of California sociology professor, Kingsley Davis, admitted that the age at marriage in the United States has fallen to an amazingly low point for an industrial country. He said the basic principle explaining the early marriage trend was this: "Anything that makes marriage less of a fateful decision, less of an economic and social commitment, less of an irreversible step, will tend to lower the age of marriage." Thus, the fundamental reason why marriage is occurring earlier, then, is that there are fewer obstacles and countervales to getting married than there used to be. Working wives, well planned

¹Grafton, op. cit., p. 119.
parenthood, the high divorce rate, and housing and educational subsidies, verify this fact. A young man today is simply deciding to get married; he is not deciding to support a wife or to have a long chain of progeny, at least not immediately. Furthermore, he and his bride half-consciously realize that if their early marriage does not work out, they can readily get a divorce or an annulment and try again.¹

"Broadly stated," he said, "the reduced age at marriage seems part of the widespread movement toward anti-intellectualism and anti-effort in our society." The emphasis, as Remmers, Radler, Riesman, Hollingshead, and other sociologists and psychologists have shown, is upon group conformity, rather than individual initiative; on security, rather than achievement; on slackness, rather than self-discipline. Davis inveighed against the attitude prevalent among the present generation of young people:

If our young people marry early, they are hardly expressing any spirit of rebellion or innovation. They are conforming to the ancient public sentiment that marriage is a good thing.

Presumably the youth of today could enjoy their sexual freedom without entanglement in marriage. In this way they could focus on preparation for adult life in a society that depends for its existence on highly trained manpower. Instead, they dawdle through years on superficial schooling, start 'going steady' in the grades or junior high, and get married when they are still wet behind the ears.

They adopt a conformist mode of life; circumstances have made marriage easy for them, and they have embraced it.

In a study of over 500 marriages, almost half of the couples who married between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, circumstances have made marriage easy for them, and they have embraced it.

IV. THE FUTURE OF TEEN-AGE MARRIAGES

What dulls the bloom of love in the homes and apartments of youthful newlyweds? "Immaturity" has been the word recurring most often, throughout the study of the investigator. In a study of 1,000 marriages, where both man and wife were under twenty and a half, "To many couples, marriage is a fairyland of fantasy, a prestige builder," said Curtis E. Coe, executive-secretary of the Family and Child Service of Omaha. He went on to add:

Then a baby arrives. The wife must care for her child, do the housework, cook the meals. The husband, ill-prepared to earn a living, must shoulder extra responsibilities. A boy used to being taken care of has to face the economic facts of life and provide for a wife and child.

Said Mrs. Cecelia Kennedy, case work supervisor for Catholic Charities:

At best, each teen-ager is bound to feel loss of freedom. In early marriage, couples frequently find themselves out of touch with contemporaries who have other interests, while they are too young to associate socially with older couples.

The opinions expressed by these social workers were substantiated by the statistics on marriage and divorce. Mrs. Albert Werthan, of the Family Service Association of America cited the record: "Brides under twenty and grooms under twenty-one account for sixty per cent of the country's

1Ibid. 2Frisbie, loc. cit. 3Ibid.
divorces; about one-third of these young marriages end in divorce."

In a study of over 500 marriages, almost half of the wives who married between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, made poor adjustments in marriage. About 40 per cent of the men who married under twenty-two years of age made poor adjustments in marriage, and only 27 per cent made good adjustments.¹ In another study of 1,000 marriages, where both man and wife were under twenty, 14 per cent ended in divorce; whereas when both were over twenty, only 6 per cent ended in divorce.²

The above facts justified the theory that romantic infatuation is an inadequate foundation for a permanent relationship. Also to be taken into consideration must be, religious background, educational attainment, age, social values, and recreational preferences. Merrill pinpointed the fault which undermines so many young marriages in the following way,

Love alone is considered sufficient to while away the long winter evenings for the duration of married life, by people who have no other aim but romance, and who do not develop intellectual resources.³

Paul Popenoe proposed that all young persons considering marriage should ask themselves the following questions:

Are we ready to give up being cared for and treated as children?

¹Landis, op. cit., p. 49.


³Merrill, op. cit., p. 34.
Are we ready for the responsibilities of adulthood; earning, and saving, and building a home together?

Can we stand on our own, independent of parents?

Are we ready to assume the responsibilities of parenthood, with the exacting routine which the care of children requires? ¹

Byrd advocated the prerequisite that, "Before marrying, each partner should have lived away from home and earned his own living for a year or more. This should be in a place far enough from home to encourage independence."

There were some rather controversial ideas introduced by Kingsley Davis with regard to the implications of the early marriage trend. He said that in all probability each woman who married at an early age would bear more children than if she had waited until she was older to have wed. The two-year reduction in age, at the time of marriage, for example, gives a woman a 7 per cent increase in sheer time of exposure to the risk of pregnancy. Furthermore, the younger the couple, the more flexible they feel about the hardships of having children, and are not hesitant about commencing to raise large families. ²

He further stated that women now have even less ambition than they had formerly. They seem entirely satisfied to enter marriage and start childbearing at the earliest opportunity. Such an attitude hinders the husband's rise on the occupational scale, and utterly rules out any occupational aspirations that she might have had. Also, the nation's

¹Landis, op. cit., p. 54. ²Davis, loc. cit.
welfare is suffering; for the exclusion of women from the learned and practicing professions, is the greatest waste of talent that occurs in our society.

Our low age at marriage and high rate of reproduction are part of a general return to primitivism, at a time when we can ill afford to waste talent. Furthermore, due to increased longevity, the woman will have many more years left in which she can re-enter the labor force; but her contribution to society will be negative when compared to what it might have been, had she received more training or education instead of getting married.¹

Your investigator found some other opinions that were quite contrary to the opinions already presented that frowned upon the matrimonial ventures of young persons. One newspaper writer quoted authorities speaking at the sixtieth annual convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers on the trend to earlier marriage. Mrs. Dorothy Nyswander, psychologist and professor of public health at the University of California said,

It can't help but be a good thing. People become physically mature in their early teens. When they are kept dependent and treated as children after they are full-grown, it creates tremendous conflicts.²

¹Ibid.  
Ralph H. Ojeman, University of Iowa professor of psychology and National Parent Teacher Association family life education chairman said:

Young marriage is a fine thing. When a girl works along with a boy to get a marriage started, it becomes a genuine cooperative enterprise. I think we made a mistake when we emphasized waiting until a man was financially established. ¹

Early marriage has some honorable tradition behind it in the United States. Through studies of case histories, it was not very difficult to see why some teen-age marriages succeed while others fail. With an inspiring obviousness, the answer seemed to be that teen-age marriages (like other marriages) succeed when they have some purpose beyond pleasure, momentary gratification, or escape. Many young couples have a double perspective; that of raising a family and of winning a professional education for the husband. It is their persistence in keeping this double goal in mind that enables them to succeed in their matrimonial venture whereas others, who lack such double purpose, fail. This helping to "Put Hubby Through" gives many a young wife a big thrill, and a sense of fulfillment gained from a sharing of his career. ²

Norman W. Paget, executive director of the Family Service Agency of San Bernardino, California, who has done much research on teen-age marriage, added a philosophical touch to the formula for success of these young marriages, when he said:

¹Ibid. ²Grafton, op. cit., pp. 122-123.
"Who marries them is the key. The happily married person is usually married at home, or in a church, or in the minister's home... not by a justice of the peace."

The cause of early marriages was further defended by Joseph N. Peacock, of the Methodist Student Foundation, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, when he asserted:

I am not ready to call into question the right of these young men and women to marry. Presumably the older we are the wiser we become, but the appalling fact is that many a man or woman at eighteen or nineteen is as thoughtful about life as some who look with disdain on the teens from the vantage of 'more mature years.'

Young people are not responsible for the image of sex and marriage abroad in our land. If we are going to let sex be packaged like a cheap cosmetic and the marriage relationship reduced to the plot of a cheap novel; if Christians are going to persist in trying to save their souls apart from their minds and bodies; if we refuse to take our young people in our confidence and face the issues of life with them in the light of truth of the Gospel, and if we are unprepared to measure our human love by the gift of love from the cross, we will have little that is worth saying to them.

Again, Elizabeth King paralleled the above message when she said, "A society which has shoved adult situations, including dating, on children as they are just coming into their teens has begged for the conditions we face now." She went on to remind parents of the following truth:

All normal young people go through the stage of successive undying loves, but marriage should end

1 Ibid.

that vacillation. Married teens must be guided into a realization that this present love cannot, must not, be abandoned, but must remain the real thing till death do them part.¹

Teen-age marriages can, and sometimes do succeed, but when they do work out, such a marriage most always goes through a strange testing period social workers uniformly describe as "sad." After their marriage has caused its initial splash of glamorous excitement, the typical teen-age couple, say a boy of seventeen and a girl of sixteen, often find that they quickly lose their teen-age friends, who have not only for their own sakes, but also because the couple feel that, after the first period of excitement passes, the young pair's problems become so other interests: games, going out for sports, dating. But the young married pair cannot make adult friends. They have, as the sociologists say, no "peer group" to which they belong and in which they can move as equals. If nearby are other teen-age married couples with whom the young people were friends at school and with whom they are compatible, friendship may continue; but kids of different backgrounds who were not buddies at school do not become friends on the basis of the fact that marriage has set in.²

Sociologists tend to agree that, particularly in the younger age groups, sixteen and seventeen, teen-age married couples are among the loneliest people in America; they are in a kind of limbo for one or two years, their marriages undergoing a unique strain, to which marriages at a later age are

¹King, loc. cit. ²Grafton, op. cit., p. 89.
not subject. There is no social group with which a boy of seventeen, married to a girl of sixteen, who is having a baby, can make contact. Frequently, such married youngsters are thrust back on their own parents as their only friends.

So quickly does this condition of loneliness set in that some high-school principals try in every way possible, where local laws allow, to keep a teen-age married couple in school, not only for their own sakes, but also because the principals feel that, after the first period of excitement and imitation passes, the young pair's problems become so visible and obvious as actually to deter other youngsters from hasty marriages.\(^1\)

There has probably never been a time in history when half-grown members of the two sexes have been so firmly thrust into one another's society as are American adolescents today. This situation is especially true in our modern "suburbias" and in the social competition found in our small towns. Furthermore, many parents are often surprisingly lenient about permitting teen-age marriages.\(^2\)

Lester Kirkendall, teacher of marriage and family relations courses at Oregon State College, formulated five "caution" signs for young couples contemplating marriage.

'Go slow' when there is a feeling that it is 'get married now or never.'

'Go slow' when there is a one-sided feeling.

\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 118.\quad ^{2}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 120.\)
'Go slow' when your intention is to reform your partner.

'Go slow' when there are strong parental objections.

'Go slow' even when there is a pregnancy.1

Despite the early marriage trend, a great many high school students are aware of the risks involved in the premature matrimonial venture. Therefore, they are definitely interested in a curriculum devoted more to family life education. A questionnaire, filled out by representative youths, revealed their belief that a lack of adequate preparation for marriage and family living is one of the greatest deficiencies in their education today.2

Such a course, designed to help students achieve happy home lives, will be introduced in New York City High Schools in the fall of 1960. The course will be offered as an elective to boys and girls in the general program... those who are not preparing to go on to college. School officials stated that the course on family living would emphasize five major areas: the family, understanding ourselves and others, teen-agers in their family, social relationships, and young children.

Among the specific topics that will be covered are: reasons for misunderstandings between teen-agers and adults; characteristics of a good home and a happy family life; and

1Lester A. Kirkendall, "Too Young to Marry," Public Affairs Pamphlet, CCXXXVI (January 24, 1957), 16-17.

2Lantogne, loc. cit.
obstacles to family happiness, and how they can be reduced.
The course will also go into matters considered important for
achieving a happy home life after marriage, including rearing
children.1

According to Miss Ethel F. Huggard, associate super-
intendent in charge of curriculum development, the course was
an "outgrowth of the feeling that young people need some edu-
cation, assistance, and guidance to help them meet the problems
they now face or will face as homemakers."

A professor of sociology at Purdue University, Harold T.
Christensen, summed up the various similar and conflicting
implications of this noticeably apparent early marriage trend
by stating:

In the end it all boils down to the necessity for
doing a better job of family life education... in
the home largely by example and in the school largely
by instruction. It must be an education that not only
imparts facts but shapes attitudes, that builds values
and provides incentives. And it must be an education
that comes early enough to do some good, starting in
elementary school and continuing through college.2

V. SUMMARY

Statistics definitely proved the existence of an
early marriage trend, and a general lowering of the age at
the time of a first marriage. This trend began with World
War II and has slowly, but steadily gained momentum during

1New York Times News Service, Des Moines Register,
April 4, 1960.
2Dunbar, loc. cit.
the post-war years. The problem was found to be much more serious in some locales than in others. Some regional surveys revealed a relatively high percentage of married students in the secondary schools, whereas other surveys showed a relatively low percentage. Of course, the marriage of married students in the secondary schools, whereas other surveys showed a relatively low percentage.

Reasons given for such a trend were: plentiful jobs and easy credit; the insecurity of our nuclear age; the glamorization of marriage by magazines, newspapers, and television; the fact that parents urge their children to "grow up too fast," yet fail to discipline them properly; and also the attitude that exists among many young people today, that the "world owes them a good time, without their having to work very hard to earn it."

Teen-agers need a better understanding of their own emotional make-up. They also need a more thorough knowledge of the obligations and responsibilities that marriage entails, and to realize that marriage is an adult relationship, bolstered by a common background, experiences, and interests—a shared way of life. Then perhaps these young people would acquire the wisdom to postpone their wedding day until they were more emotionally mature.

The two adages, "Time is a better test than marriage itself," and "A love that beckons to a lifetime together is surely worth some years of preparation," well describe the attitude high school students or teen-agers should have towards their future wedding plans.
Early and steady dating leads to serious emotional involvement, a premature courtship, a hasty marriage, and often unsurmountable problems which find a rather unsatisfactory solution in a divorce court. Of course, the marriage marked increase in teen-age marriage presents marriages of many young couples do survive the struggle of those early years, due to their dual purpose of "pulling together," and sincerely desiring to succeed as a family. Both of these goals tend to create an unbreakable bond of loyalty between them. In 1956 a nationwide sampling of opinions a young husband and wife.

Administrators revealed that 78 per cent believed both husband and wife students should be allowed to attend classes; 5 per cent believed married persons definitely should not be allowed to attend school; and the remainder would permit attendance with limitations.

POLICIES ADVOCATED AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOL BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE UNITED STATES

School boards are faced with a dilemma, for the fact is not down that some school systems simply expel married students, this policy guarantees the presence of an increasing number uneducated young parents in this country.

In his study of high school marriages in New Mexico, he found that twelve of seventy-five school boards had definite policies for the immediate expulsion of any student.

1 Opinion Poll, "If Students Marry, They Should Be Permitted to Stay in Public High Schools, Believes Majority of Administrators," Nation's Schools, LVIII (November, 1956), 86.
CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The marked increase in teen-age marriage presents a challenge to the American high schools especially in regard to the methods used in dealing with the students involved. So far there has been nothing like a uniform policy on how to deal with them. In 1956 a nationwide sampling of opinions of administrators revealed that 78 per cent believed both husband and wife students should be allowed to attend classes; 15.5 per cent believed married persons definitely should not be allowed to attend school; and the remainder would permit attendance with limitations.\(^1\)

I. POLICIES ADVOCATED AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOL BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE UNITED STATES

Landis made a similar study in California and said that some school systems simply expel married students, but this policy guarantees the presence of an increasing number of uneducated young parents in this country.

In his study of high school marriages in New Mexico, Ivins found that twelve of seventy-five school boards had definite policies for the immediate expulsion of any student who married; six additional boards suspended married students for periods ranging from one semester to permanent suspension, and in a matter of school policy did not have written policies stating such; two principals indicated that they expelled students who married, without direct action of the board; and two other principals indicated that they suspended students immediately after marriage without the board's consent. Responses to a questionnaire showed that a typical action taken by the principals was to hold conferences with the students upon their return to school after marriage. The purpose of those conferences appeared to be discouragement of continuation in most cases, the outlining of new and more stringent conditions, making clear that the students could not participate in extracurricular activities, or in other ways.

\(^1\) Opinion Poll, "If Students Marry, They Should Be Permitted to Stay in Public High Schools, Believes Majority of Administrators," Nation's Schools, LVIII (November, 1956), 86.
who married; six additional boards suspended married students for periods ranging from one semester to permanent suspension, as a matter of school policy, but they did not have written policies stating such; two principals indicated that they expelled students who married, without direct action of the board; and two other principals indicated that they suspended students immediately after marriage without the board's consent. Responses to a questionnaire showed that a typical action taken by the principals was to hold conferences with the students upon their return to school after marriage. The purpose of those conferences appeared to be discouragement of continuance in most cases, the outlining of new and more stringent conditions, making clear that the students could not participate in extracurricular activities, or in other ways indicating to the student that conditions would be different as a result of marriage. 1

Landis made a similar study in California and found that administrators generally took a negative attitude toward married students and encouraged early withdrawal. State laws did not permit expelling students for marrying, but very few enforced compulsory attendance laws following marriage. In cases of pregnancy after marriage, some principals encouraged withdrawal; some expelled students as soon as the condition

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became known; some provided home instruction; and one principal considered pregnant students beneficial to other students. Most principals reported no contemplated changes of policy.

According to Cavan and Beling, Illinois high schools had no legal right to suspend or expel students because of marriage; however, they could expel or suspend students whose presence in school negatively affected the morale of other students. Most schools lacked definite policies, and where they did exist, there was much variation from one school to another. Without regard for the law, six of the eighty-four schools surveyed either expelled immediately or permanently suspended a student after marriage, and in twenty-one other schools, the student was either dropped or automatically left school. Principals of eleven schools took no action, and fourteen principals allowed students to remain in school if they desired. In twenty-seven other schools married students were allowed to remain as long as conduct and scholarship were above reproach and the married girl did not become pregnant. Only twenty-nine schools allowed married students to continue in school on the same basis as unmarried students.\(^1\)

One rather different and standard policy was found to

\footnote{\textit{Landis and Landis, op. cit.}, pp. 130-132.}

\footnote{\textit{Cavan and Beling, op. cit.}, pp. 293-294.}

\footnote{\textit{Grafton, op. cit.}, p. 134. Ibid.}

\footnote{\textit{Pristie, loc. cit.}}
exist in the schools of Dade County, Florida, where married students were transferred to adult evening classes. In a recent year, there were 500 Dade County married students transferred in that manner.\(^1\)

A number of high schools in California take no action whatever when students marry, although some put them on probationary status and expected higher grades than from non-married students. J. T. Landis and K. C. Kidd gave an excellent example of current policy confusion in their paper, "Attitudes and Policies Concerning Marriages Among High School Students," when they stated that eleven California high schools encouraged withdrawal of married students, while twenty-two encouraged them to stay in school.\(^2\)

The Omaha, Nebraska, schools try to discourage their students from marrying because they feel the young people are only "short-changing" themselves. Once married, they cannot participate in extracurricular activities, because they have accepted the status of adults and can no longer play a child's role.\(^3\)

II. LEGAL ASPECTS AND EDUCATIONAL THEORIES REGARDING MARRIED STUDENTS ATTENDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In general, these high school marriages raise two fundamental legal questions: (1) Can the school board, under a

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\(^1\) Grafton, op. cit., p. 124. 
\(^2\) Ibid. 
\(^3\) Frisbie, loc. cit.
compulsory education law, require a minor, who has married before attaining the age when he may legally withdraw from school, to continue his attendance in school? (2) Can a school board refuse admission to one who has married before completing his public school education?  

Very few cases are related to the first question, for most married students are above the age of required attendance, but such a case was tried in Louisiana.

A girl, age fourteen, discontinued school, and was brought into juvenile court as a delinquent; the higher court held her marriage valid, in spite of the fact that it was consummated in violation of a law which prohibited ministers and magistrates from marrying any female under the age of sixteen and which fixed a 72 hour waiting period following the issuance of the license. Her marriage was valid and she was released from parental control, and . . . was no longer bound to the compulsory attendance law of the state.  

The second question was the one more frequently raised, one of the most recent instances being in Tennessee. 

In February, 1957, a high school girl, who was eighteen and in her senior year, was married. The school board refused her permission to attend classes for the remainder of the year. The father-in-law brought action, and the higher court upheld the decision that they could keep her out of school.  

The principals of four high schools asked the school board to grant this decision. The court said, 'We are accustomed to accept the testimony of experts in the various fields of human activity, as to what is reasonably necessary for the welfare of the particular activity as to

1 Lee O. Garber, "School Board Can Expel Married Students, Court Rules," Nation's Schools, LXI (April, 1958), 63-64.
2 Ibid.
which this expert therein is testifying. No reason is suggested as to why this practice should not be followed when the witness is an expert in the field of operating public high schools. 1

It is true that in some areas of the United States the problem of marriage in high school is practically nonexistent, whereas in other areas it is an acute problem. Such was the case in Artesia High School, New Mexico. In 1955-56, thirty-two girls and two boys were married, 6 per cent of the high school population. As a result, the following policy was adopted and printed in the student handbook.

Artesia High School discourages marriages of high school students. We do not feel that the best educational interests can possibly be served through marriages which take place at such an early age. The adjustment and responsibilities should not be taken lightly. Happy and successful marriages form the basic foundation of our country. Such marriages require maturity of judgment, and considerable knowledge and understanding. It is important that the most favorable circumstances possible attend each and every marriage. Attending school, with the demands and responsibilities of the classroom, does not provide such favorable circumstances.

Because of these reasons and many others unexpressed, we urge all students to complete their high school education before planning marriage. Marriage is a full-time job, especially during the early days when there are so many adjustments to be made.

If there are those who plan to be married and continue in school, the following statement of policy must be understood and adhered to:

1) Before getting married, the student will have a conference with the high school principal or counselor.

2) As soon as a student returns to school after marriage, he will be required to have a conference with the principal.

1 Ibid.
3) If, after the conference, the student continues in school, he will have the same status as other students, except in those extracurricular organizations where special provisions have been adopted concerning married students.

4) In accepting equal status with other students, it is to be understood that married students will not be given special consideration with respect to school policy. Attendance must be regular. An undue amount of absence, regardless of cause, may result in dismissal from school. If it becomes necessary to withdraw from school, the student will lose the work for the semester in which he withdraws. Since we have no personnel for home-bound students, it will not be possible to complete work outside the classroom.

From the various surveys studied it became evident to your investigator that something more coherent was needed in the way of a uniform policy with regard to married students in the secondary schools. He found no agreement even on the question of whether the presence of married students was a detriment to a high school, or perhaps an asset, as a means of showing the other students some of the realities of married life.

The situation in New Mexico was typical of that type of disagreement. On the first questionnaire sent by Ivins, many principals in New Mexico high schools volunteered the opinion that student marriages did not constitute a problem for the school; however, when principals were asked specifically in a second questionnaire if they believed student marriages were a problem for the principal, teachers, or the school in general, many changed their answers.

school in general, their responses were somewhat different.

Of seventy-five principals, forty-one replied that student marriage was a real problem, compared to twenty who said it was not a problem. The persons for whom the problems were most severe and the reasons given by the principals, in the order of the number of times listed were:

1. For the principal, student marriages created additional administrative work and problems, such as making provisions for special scheduling, establishing special rules and regulations, and developing new procedures for discipline; for the superintendent, they made a difficult situation when pregnancy occurred, and created a shortage in average daily attendance and consequently a shortage of state support.

2. For the community, high school students were too immature to marry and thereby 'upset' the community; and marriage often eliminated students from school and the community lost the benefits to be derived from more highly educated citizens.

3. For fellow students, there was the immediate pressure from the principal and teachers to avoid the fad of marrying; and there was difficulty in maintaining morale and self-discipline in the face of deviate behavior by the married students.

4. For the teachers, the married students lost their interest in school and were hard to motivate; they attended irregularly and thereby complicated the work of the teachers; and teachers were often blamed by the principal or by community citizens for some of the actions of the married students.

5. For the married students, themselves, there were difficulties in adjusting to their new status, while continuing as students.

In response to the question of which aspect of the marriage problem was most serious to the school in general, nine out of every ten principals stated that it was either...
the undesirable influence of married students upon unmarried students, or the lack of maturity with the resulting lack of satisfactory adjustment of newly-married students to both marriage and their different status in school. Whereas twenty-nine principals considered married students as an asset to the school, twenty-six stated that they were a definite liability, and twelve gave divided opinions depending upon the circumstances.\(^1\) Slightly more than one-third of the principals who reported in Landis's California study thought that married students created classroom problems, whereas over one-half thought that no classroom problem existed. Extracurricular activities were the source of the greatest trouble with emotional disturbances listed as the chief problem. Types of problems created by married students in the order of prevalence were: (1) discussion of marital sexual experiences, (2) irregular attendance and high drop-out rate, (3) encouragement to others to marry. Married students were considered more stable, more mature, and an asset to the school environment by thirty-one principals.\(^2\)

In Illinois high schools, Cavan and Beling found that pregnancy was considered to be the most serious problem resulting from student marriages. Other problems noted were:

\(^1\)Ivins, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-59, 71-73.
\(^2\)Landis and Landis, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-134.
the discussion between married and unmarried girls of the facts of intimate family living, the glamorization of marriage to the extent that it was likely to become a fad, irregular school attendance by married students, and the fact that married couples were no longer typical high school students due to the many adjustments they had to make. Only four principals considered married students as an asset.

Although 39 per cent of the married boys and 66 per cent of the married girls dropped out of school at the time of marriage, principals did not regard this drop-out rate as a serious problem. In spite of the fact that married students were eliminated or restricted from associating with other students, seventy-four of the schools surveyed had some type of counseling program and 70 per cent had family life courses.\(^1\)

### III. LETTER OF INQUIRY TO IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS

The State Department of Public Instruction in Iowa recently advised public high schools not to discriminate against married students.\(^2\) Since the investigator wanted to gain a more complete picture of the policies of Iowa high schools in regard to married students, and also to find out to what extent the schools were adhering to the above suggestion proposed by the State Department, a letter of inquiry was sent to twenty-six representative Iowa high schools with

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2. Barewald, loc. cit.
enrollments of more than 300 students, asking their respective superintendents to state their policies towards married students. 

The larger schools were used because their enrollments would furnish a broader, more inclusive area from which to derive facts, conclusions, and implications. The student bodies of those schools would be more representative, that is, they would be more likely to include all types of students in regard to economic status, social class, and mental and physical potentialities. The schools were selected from the list of approved Four Year Public High School Districts in Iowa, published in 1958 by the Department of Public Instruction.¹ The 694 schools were listed in order of their size and the investigator selected twenty-six from among the first one hundred schools listed. An important factor in choosing the schools to be canvassed was their geographical location, because it was desirable to represent all the sections of the state, the northwest, southwest, northeast, southeast, and central areas.

The superintendents to which the letters of inquiry were sent, in the order of their size of school enrollment were: Sioux City, Davenport, Waterloo, Burlington, Clinton, Dubuque, Mason City, Marshalltown, Newton, Ames, Iowa City, and in some cases we might even go so far as to require

Oskaloosa, Bettendorf, Webster City, Fairfield, Decorah, Estherville, Atlantic, Creston, Denison, Eagle Grove, Perry, Waverly, Harlan, Sac City, and Jefferson. Twenty-three superintendents out of twenty-six responded to the letters of inquiry for a response percentage of 88. The replies received ranged in length from one sentence to several short paragraphs. The attitudes expressed were widely divergent, but were informative as to the factors, conditions, and social pressures that combined to determine the policies. The superintendents and schools represented will be referred to by letters of the alphabet due to the confidential nature of the subject under consideration.

Eight of the superintendents stated that they had no standard school policy. Seven superintendents of schools, five of the above plus two others, stated that they gave individual attention to cases of marriage and sometimes treated each case on its merits. A good example of the above general situation was given by superintendent H:

"The H Community Schools have no printed policy in regard to married students. We do, however, go on the assumption that marriage is an honorable estate, and while we certainly do not encourage marriage among our students, we do not question their right to continue in school. There may be other questions which conceivably could arise in connection with a married student which might cause the school authorities to advise the persons involved to discontinue school, and in some cases we might even go so far as to require it.

The policies reported in the answers received from the twenty-six superintendents of schools fell into three main
categories: (1) those that definitely discouraged student marriages, (2) those that did not discriminate against married students, and (3) those that allowed married students to continue, but with penalties. These three groups are presented under the briefer headings of unfavorable schools, favorable schools, and condition schools. In order to avoid confusion the question of pregnancy is answered under a fourth and separate heading, and therefore is not mentioned in the above general classification. It must be assumed that pregnancy was not a factor to be reckoned with in the following three-way study.

Unfavorable schools. Joseph S. Davies, instruction department legal advisor, said, "Quite a few school systems have had policies barring married students from school." An example of this was furnished by Superintendent McKee of New London, Iowa, who argued:

Our high school used to automatically suspend any students who got married during the school year. Since the state warned against this type of policy, it has been dropped. But unless something is done, a flood of high school marriages may result. I would favor some policy that would consider married students as no longer minors. It would get around it the other way, to make them pay tuition, to penalize them a little bit for getting married during the year.¹

Although New London was not one of the schools included in the survey attempted by your investigator, a similar situation

¹Barewald, loc. cit. ²Ibid.
was found to exist in three of the schools that were surveyed, J, V, and O. These schools required high school students, boys or girls, to withdraw for one full semester if they got married. The J reply indicated that the community seemed to approve of such a rule. School V allowed the students to re-enter the next semester by written application to the Board of Education. This policy was also in effect at School O and was written up in the handbook given to all high school students.

The resolution, adopted by the Board of Directors in May, 1957, is as follows:

A student marrying before graduation withdraws immediately for a period of four months or until the end of the current semester, whichever is a longer period. Married students wishing to re-enter the O High School must apply for admission to the Administration and Board of Directors.

**Favorable schools.** There were seven schools that treated married students the same as unmarried students. The K High School had the following definite printed policy, legislative in nature, which was designed to protect the student, married or unmarried.

Married students have the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as single students. This includes the privileges of participating in extracurricular activities, such as athletics. Within the Iowa law it is provided that schools are to take pupils between the ages of five and twenty-one.

Under the school law, conduct detrimental to other pupils attending the school is ground for expulsion. A single student or a married student who conducts himself in such a way as to be a disruptive influence in the school will be subject to dismissal.
Superintendent A merely stated that their policy was to let married students continue in school but they did not reveal just what their status would be in regard to participation in extracurricular activities. School W has had an unwritten policy of "accepting married students as we would any other student." School C also "treats them as other pupils."

The policy of School N is "that married students may continue in high school after marriage," but again the question of participation in extracurricular activities was unanswered. At S High no discrimination is made against married students. Boys are allowed to continue in extracurricular activities as long as their conduct is up to standard. Superintendent L wrote the following: "We make no exception for married students. They may attend and have all the rights and privileges of other students."

Condition schools. There were nine schools that allowed married students to continue with their studies, but at the same time they imposed a "punishment" upon these boys and girls by taking away certain privileges. At School Q both the boy and girl were excluded from social activities. The girl was not permitted to take part in extracurricular activities, and whether or not the boy could take part depended upon the individual and other related factors. The Q superintendent commented, "I personally feel that too much commotion and confusion is caused by such cases. I can't see that any of our
people have ever been detrimental to the school or student body." Also in School G both boys and girls were allowed to remain in school (unless the latter was pregnant), and as to the matter of activities, "each case was treated on its merits."

Married students at School Y are usually permitted to finish school but they have to drop extracurricular activities. Their superintendent added, "We have not had married males in school during the past fourteen years. They have not requested remaining in school. This same policy holds true at Schools M and Z, and in contrast, at the latter school most of the married girls have dropped out.

Marriage suspends a student automatically at School X. They may apply for re-admission and if no immorality involved they will be allowed to re-enter. They are not allowed to engage in athletics, music, speech, clubs, et cetera but are allowed to go through the graduation exercises with their class. B School permitted married students to continue "after a detailed conference with each one and the parents of one or both parties." The question of participation in activities seemed rather doubtful as Superintendent B added, "We arrange the schedule so that each, the husband and wife, are released after their last class; and these classes are arranged in sequence, if possible." School T had quite a standard procedure but exceptions to the rule would be made if necessary. Their policy read:
In the case of a married boy student, after he has been interviewed by the guidance counselor and by the principal, he is dropped from all activities including sports, physical education, music, study halls, etcetera, with certain limitations. Three schools are known to have such a policy.

The guidance counselor and principal each interview the girl about her plans. If she is not pregnant and if she wishes to remain in school she is allowed to do so, but is dropped from all activities including physical education, clubs, music, and study halls. In other words, she will come to school only for her classes and then leave. If the other three schools needed to complete the report, we might be obliged to permit an outstanding boy athlete to continue in sports.

Some high schools have policies requiring just the girl to drop out of school for a semester. Such was the case at School P where the married boys may attend school but the married girls must remain out of school for nine months. Superintendent F stated that they had "no standard. There was no comment as to extracurricular activities. This one-sided attitude was best explained by Bernard Bolton, principal of Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, another typical school not surveyed, when he said,

"We have an unwritten rule that the girl must drop out for one semester. Then she can come back. The boy cannot participate in any extra activities, but can go to school. School officials do not regard this as discrimination; if the girl is a senior she can go to night school and graduate with her class. We do this for the protection of the other students."

It must be realized that when these above condition schools do allow full participation in the various extracurricular activities, as they sometimes do according to the individuals affected, they then could be classified as favorable schools.

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1Ibid.
Thus, there were seventeen schools that definitely gave these married teen-agers a chance to finish their high school education, with certain limitations. Three schools discouraged these teen-agers to a much greater degree, but did permit them to finish their schooling eventually if they had the patience and fortitude to come back after an "imposed vacation." What of the other three schools needed to complete the report of twenty-three returned inquiry forms from the three two married girls attending school at M. "They both superintendents? Superintendent R's answer was vague and indefinite, "We do not have a standard policy. We consider each case individually, and the circumstances leading up to the marriage are the determining factor." Both Superintendent U and Superintendent F stated that they had "no standard policy." There were three schools that failed to respond at all to the letter of inquiry.

Policies regarding pregnancy. The situation found in Iowa regarding this phase of the teen-age marriage problem was typical of the nation as a whole. In the majority of the twenty-three schools responding, a married girl student would be asked to leave school, eventually, if not immediately. The three schools that required both the boy and girl to withdraw for a semester and also the one that automatically asked the girl to leave for a period of nine months, solved the problem of a possible pregnancy in that manner, without embarrassment to the persons concerned.
Ten schools definitely stated that if the married girl student were pregnant, she would be asked to drop out of school at once. At School T, the school nurse is asked to have a personal talk with the girl to discover if she is pregnant, and if so, she is asked to leave. However, "if the girl is near graduation or could finish out a semester before quitting, her condition might be overlooked." At present, there were two married girls attending school at M. "They both were pointedly asked about their physical condition; reference answers were satisfactory, and they have taken their place as well-adjusted members of our student body," commented Superintendent M.

The superintendent of L School said, "Obviously, if a girl becomes noticeably pregnant, she is expected to withdraw. We have had no trouble in this respect." School S urges their girls who are forced to quit school to finish by correspondence work. At School N, "When the young lady is pregnant, she shall drop out of school for the balance of the school year and may enroll again the following year." A similar policy was also found at School F, where the girl involved dropped out, "but if she desired, she would be permitted to re-enter after the child was born."

School Q was more lenient than the above ten schools. They allowed a girl, if pregnant, to attend classes for about seven months, but excluded her from extracurricular activities.
There were two very liberal views in regard to the matter of pregnancy. One large high school district, C, stated that a married woman was not dropped from school immediately for reasons of pregnancy. She might be dropped later on if it seemed best for the good of the school. There was one school, V, that cited a definite case where the girl remained in school until her baby arrived, dropped out for two weeks, then came back to complete her work.

Although the above survey of representative Iowa high schools revealed three distinct types of policies used in dealing with teen-age marriages, there seemed to be a desire on the part of administrators to take a more united stand on the subject. This was evident at the annual meeting this past spring of the Iowa Association of Secondary School Principals and Administrators of North Central High School Schools, when the majority of the delegates agreed to the following:

- High school students who get married should be encouraged to complete their high school education.
- However, to discourage early marriages, these students should be excluded from not only sports, but also such activities as band and dramatics.
- Pregnant girls should be dropped from school for health and moral reasons: the girls should be permitted to continue their education after pregnancy, mainly through correspondence study.¹

"It looks now as though schools sanction early marriages because they don't do anything to discourage them," the report states.¹

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¹Albia Times-Republican, May 4, 1960, p. 3.
principals said, citing the liberal trend toward permitting married students to attend classes, especially boys. They went on to add, however, "that with effective counseling, most cases involving married people in high school solve themselves." Effective counseling seemed to provide the answer as to how to meet the situation, and could be used as both a preventive measure and a post-marriage help.

IV. SUMMARY

In summarizing the "Presentation of Data" the investigator found that the results he obtained from his survey of representative Iowa high schools paralleled to a great extent the findings of sociologists in their respective one-state surveys. There definitely exists, not only in certain locales, but throughout the United States, from east to west, and from north to south, a discrepancy in policies advocated and actions taken by school boards and administrators in regard to students who marry while still in high school. But the gap between agreement and disagreement as to courses of action in regard to these marriages is narrowing. A great deal of thought and effort has been put forth towards formulating an acceptable universal policy that would govern the majority of teen-age marriage situations. Although this desire for a more united course of action was apparent, there also existed the feeling that each case of teen-age marriage was unique in itself and deserved individual attention and special consideration.

1Ibid.
The majority of educators believed that married students did not truly belong in a secondary school environment, but after they were once there, they should be given a chance to finish their education, and helped in every way possible to make their marriage succeed. Effective counseling seemed to provide the answer as to how to meet the situation, and could be used as both a preventive measure and a post-marriage adjustment policy.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) whether the problem of marriage in high school was serious and prevalent enough to merit the nationwide attention and action of leading educators and sociologists; and (2) if so, to discover the reasons behind an early marriage trend, and to find what steps have been taken and can be taken to alleviate the situation; also to determine if teen-agers contemplating marriage are ready and adequately trained to accept the serious responsibilities of wedlock.

This study was based upon descriptive research, and used the data-gathering device of document or content analysis. The literature reviewed included: (1) books on dating, courtship, romantic love, marriage, the family, and other related aspects; and (2) articles published in periodicals, pamphlets, and newspapers within the past five years, dealing with teenage marriages. The data presented covered the actions taken and policies advocated by representative school boards and school administrators throughout the United States, and included a special study of legal aspects and the problems created in a secondary school environment by married students.
As a supplement to the study a letter of inquiry was sent to the superintendents of twenty-six representative Iowa high schools with enrollments over three hundred.

Statistics showed the existence of a definite early marriage trend. They further revealed that such a trend did present a very serious problem in some high schools, whereas in other high schools, the problem was not as serious but was certainly a matter of increasing concern. Educators and sociologists seem to be fully aware of the perils of this rush to the altar as they have written many recent and quite pertinent articles on the subject of teen-age marriages in an attempt to alert parents and young people themselves to this modern day problem that confronts them.

Most couples who marry young are apt to think of marriage as one long excitement of love, glamour, and romance. When the "honeymoon" is over they are disillusioned. These young people should face the fact that they are probably trying to escape from something, such as hard discipline at home or in school; or they are seeking to gain something, such as prestige, companionship, or understanding.

Today's boys and girls are also victims of the insecure age in which they live with its "easy come, easy go" philosophy. These youngsters need help from parents, teachers, and friends in establishing a higher goal towards which to direct their lives and also a guarantee that they must put forth
their very best efforts towards achieving such a worthwhile goal. More specifically, young people must learn to accept the fact that happiness in marriage, like other good things in life, has its price: it often calls for a degree of suffering, self-denial, and renunciation of personal ambitions for larger life values.

A wide discrepancy was found among the policies of school boards with regard to married students in the secondary schools. This fact was well illustrated by the answers received back from the twenty-six letters of inquiry sent to the superintendents of representative Iowa high schools, with enrollments over three hundred.

About one-fourth of these schools gave married students all the rights and privileges that the other students enjoyed. But approximately another one-fourth of these schools asked the married couple to drop out of school for a certain period of time, several months, a semester, or for the rest of the year. Usually before being re-admitted an application to the school board or an interview with the school administrators was required. Roughly one-half of these schools allowed married students to remain but curtailed their extra-curricular activities. The majority of the girls who were pregnant were dropped immediately or eventually.

Although at present, "unity in action" does not prevail throughout the majority of high schools in Iowa or across the
nation, in regard to the treatment accorded married students, there seems to be a trend to act upon each case individually, evidenced by the lack of actual written or standard policies. Although some teachers and administrators felt that married couples were an asset to a secondary school environment, many of them believed that these couples should not be allowed to remain in school because of their negative influences upon fellow students.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The following general conclusions were arrived at as a result of this study of married students in the secondary schools:

Americans are a marrying people. They marry early and often. From the time girls and boys are old enough to listen to the radio, read the popular magazines, go to the movies, or watch television, they are made aware of the supreme importance of meeting the right sweethearts or lovers, attracting them by the force of their "personalities," and ultimately marrying them and living happily ever after.

After being thoroughly indoctrinated as to the true meanings of dating, courtship, and marriage, and the related concepts of romantic love and its sexual counterpart, most teen-agers and adults would be forced to agree with the theory that dating is the only phase that truly belongs in a high school.
First, through dating, the young person comes to realize that there are a number of people with whom he or she could be happy in marriage, and that there are others with whom he or she could not possibly get along. Secondly, the physical complications and the state of mind associated with the more serious types of friendships, are incompatible with the best interests of a secondary education. Any student, in the throes of courtship, and under the influence of romantic love, is unable to give his best, academically or spiritually, to the school he attends.

Case histories showed that married students have difficulty in adjusting to their changed status in a secondary school environment and simultaneously to their new "home life." For this reason these early marriages should be prevented if at all possible for the good of the couple and the school.

The investigator must agree with the sociologists who contend that teen-agers or high school students are not usually mature enough in their emotions and judgments for marriage. They tend to make very unstable husbands, wives, and parents. The best time to contemplate matrimony seems to be in the early and middle twenties. . . not in or just out of high school. Marrying too young is definitely one of the main causes of divorce.

However, some young people are ready and willing, and possess the dual strength of purposes to tackle the task that
matrimony entails. In such cases, marriage often does succeed and becomes an individual affair, having less to do with birthdays and more to do with emotional maturity.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The best way to combat the early marriage trend is by early and proper sex education for youngsters, and required courses in marriage and the family and related topics for adolescents. Along with this there should be more complete counseling facilities available to young people and their parents. This could include an expansion of adult education courses stressing child rearing and family relationships.

When teen-agers do go ahead and marry, they should be allowed to continue their education and "high school days" as normally as possible. This would require an altering of some school board policies towards a greater degree of leniency.

To carry out the above recommendations, alert school administrators, wise counselors, broad-minded school board members, sympathetic social workers, and understanding parents, are desperately needed to help young people solve one of the big questions in their lives, "Whom should we marry and when?"
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May 16, 1960
Denison, Iowa

Dear Sir:

I am in the process of making a study on the subject of married students in the secondary schools. I wish to include in this study the policies of representative Iowa high schools in regard to the above topic.

Therefore, I would appreciate it if you would answer the following general questions on the enclosed sheet and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

APPENDIX

Thank you for your cooperation!

Max C. Laggett
1632 1st Avenue South
Denison, Iowa
May 16, 1960

Letter of Inquiry to _________ High School

May 16, 1960
Denison, Iowa

What are your policies towards married students?

A. If you have a standard policy, please explain it.

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Therefore, I would appreciate it if you would answer the following general questions on the enclosed sheet and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

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B. If you treat such cases individually, please state a recent example, if possible.

Max C. Liggett
1622 1st Avenue South
Denison, Iowa
May 16, 1960

Letter of Inquiry to _______ High School

I. What are your policies towards married students?

   A. If you have a standard policy, please explain it.

   B. If you treat each case individually, please state a recent example, if possible.