

ABSTRACT

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISSOLVED AND INTACT PREGNANCY-PROVOKED TEENAGE MARRIAGES; A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

By

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Forty pregnancy-provoked teenage married couples who took part in premarital screening were contacted after one to three years of marriage. Data gathered prior to marriage and during the follow-up study were used. Hypotheses suggesting positive relationships between (1) the degree of parental approval of the marriage and marital stability and (2) between rural residency and a high degree of parental approval, and inverse relationships between (3) the father's socioeconomic level and (4) level of education and the degree of parental approval of the marriage were tested. None of the hypotheses were supported. The small sample size, low divorce rate, and skewed distribution of subjects on the parental approval variable partially account for these findings. Further analyses suggested that marital stability among teenagers may not be directly related to the age at marriage as earlier studies suggested but may be inversely related to the education level to which the teenager aspires.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Pregnancy for girls, or couples, under 18 years of age can be a very complex experience with the potential for drastically upsetting the equilibrium of the families of the couple involved. There can be unpleasant consequences for all three generations, the grandparents, the couple, and the child. These consequences may be social, psychological, economic and physiological.

The immediate social consequences appear as embarrassment at home, in school and in the social milieu of one's peers. There may be pressures to marry, to quit school or to have an abortion. Though in some settings, the couple initially may be treated as heroes by their peers, pressures from teachers, parents and the impending birth may soon overcome this positive input.

Psychologically, teenage parents must deal with the conflict of being a child with adult responsibilities immediately being thrust upon them. In a few short months they are expected to leave childhood behind them and assume adult, i.e., parenting, roles.

Immediate economic problems include: how to pay for the doctor, the hospital and the baby's needs after birth. Quitting school to get an unskilled job to help pay these bills can have a permanent effect on the couple's economic future.

Though the young parents may share the consequences mentioned above, only the girl faces immediate physical consequences. First there is the changing physical shape and size, perhaps morning sickness, and the possibility of a complicated delivery, which is much higher for teenagers than for women between 20 and 29 years of age.

The families of orientation of both of the new parents may go through a stressful period as questions about blame, responsibility, trust, and what to do next are considered. This soul-searching will have its effects on the couple as they attempt to answer their own questions.

There are also critical consequences for the fetus conceived by the young couple. Will it be kept to term or aborted? If the child is carried to term, the chances of birth defects and infant mortality are much higher than for children born to women in their twenties. If the child is carried to term and survives birth, will the child be given to an adoption agency or kept by the parents?

The long term consequences for these three generations depend on the interaction of the immediate consequences mentioned above, the decisions made by the couple

and their parents, and upon the resources that the parent generations have available to them. Research seems to indicate that the couple has a high probability of:

(1) having an unstable relationship, should they marry (M. LaBarre, 1968; Cromwell, 1974; Furstenberg, 1976), (2) never attaining the social or economic status of their peers (Coombs, Freedman, Freidman & Pratt, 1970), (3) needing public services (Bacon, 1974), and (4) having a larger than average family (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1973). The child may not be the intellectual or physical equal of its peers either (Opel & Royston, 1971).

With all of these possibilities facing them, it is instructive to look at the decisions that young couples are making today. For the past decade, the birthrate, or fertility level of Americans as a whole has been dropping steadily. At the same time, the number of births to teenage parents has been increasing (Braen & Forbush, 1975). Today, one girl in ten is a mother before her eighteenth birthday (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1973). The most rapid rate of increase in the birthrate is among women 14 to 16 years of age.

While there has been a drop in the number of teenagers who marry (Nye, 1976), the birthrate among teenagers has been rising. The number of pregnant teenagers who choose to have their babies adopted is also declining. However, significant numbers of pregnant teenagers do

marry and keep the child, and, rather than solving or ending their problems, may simply be compounding them. Unknowingly, the choice which many pregnant teenage girls make is between being an unwed mother or being a mother of two or more children in three to five years and perhaps a divorcee.

A marriage entered into quickly, under parental and/or societal pressure, and with the problems faced by a teenage couple, might be expected to be a frail unit. Indeed, data from several studies support this notion. Separation rates for couples in pregnancy provoked marriages are double the rate of their peers who married but were not premaritally pregnant (Furstenberg, 1976). Cromwell (1974) reported that the divorce rate for pregnancy provoked teenage marriage was as high as 75 percent.

Since almost half of all brides in their first marriage are teenagers (M. LaBarre, 1968), and since teenage parents account for almost one out of every five births in the U.S. (M. LaBarre, 1968), it is important to study all facets of this phenomenon. Most of the studies of pregnant adolescents have focused on the girl. Males involved with teenage pregnancies and marriages are generally overlooked. Some studies have included the families of orientation. Only rarely have studies included the infant.

The present study provides the opportunity to investigate some of the interactions between the family system and some of the family's environments. The families of orientation are viewed as environments for the teenagers before their marriage. The effects of the economic system, the school system and residence, as one component of the social environment on the couple, are examined.

Overall Purpose and Focus of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to isolate differences between intact and dissolved pregnancy provoked marriages. Couples in pregnancy provoked teenage marriages are followed up, one to three years after their marriage, to find out the current status of the marriages and to explore the differences between those that are intact and those that are dissolved.

Secondly, the data collected allow a brief re-examination of the findings of earlier studies concerning factors associated with pregnancy in teenagers. However, the focus of this study is the outcome of the marriages and the data collected reflect this.

Assumptions

Some important assumptions underlie this study:

1. Those who marry during the early teenage years will be relatively naive in their ability to handle intimate interpersonal relationships. They will

have had less time to experience such relationships with other opposite-sex peers or their spouses (prior to the marriage) than older persons. This naivete, compounded by pregnancy, early marriage, and childbirth, will result in a high level of stress within the marriage. Older teenagers who marry may experience many of the same stresses but to a lesser degree due to their relatively greater experience with intimate interpersonal relationships.

2. Rural families will differ from urban families in their standard of a "proper age" to marry or in their reactions to children who violate this standard. Lower class families will also differ from middle and upper class families on this standard.
3. Family support during pregnancy, prior to and during marriage will reduce the stress experienced by these couples and/or increase their ability to successfully handle stresses that do arise.
4. There are objective, measurable differences between teenage couples whose marriages remain intact and those whose marriages are not intact.
5. Couples are able to recall accurately information about the events surrounding their marriages and

will openly and honestly share this information with the researcher.

6. All data collected, the background data and the present data, are not biased by socially acceptable answers.

Definitions

An adolescent is a person in the period of life from puberty to the legally defined age of majority. In this study, the term is used interchangeably with teenager to refer to those persons between the ages of 12 and 18.

A teenage marriage is defined here as a marriage in which at least one member of the dyad is 18 years old or less.

A pregnancy provoked marriage is one that follows the discovery of pregnancy and is entered into in reaction to the pregnancy. It includes those for whom marriage was planned and the occurrence of pregnancy merely quickened the process. It does not discriminate between planned or unplanned pregnancies.

Premarital pregnancy, which is the defining characteristic of a pregnancy provoked marriage, refers to pregnancy that occurs prior to marriage. For the purposes of this study, premarital pregnancy was indicated by child birth prior to marriage or during the first seven months of the marriage.

An intact marriage is one in which the couple continues to live together.

A dissolved marriage is one that has ended in divorce or in which the couple has been separated one month or longer.

Parental approval or support can refer to various levels of emotional, social, moral, or economic support flowing from parent to child. In this study, it is inferred from indicators of support perceived by the members of the marital dyad. Specifically it refers to the degree of support that the couple received from their parents at the time of the marriage. The highest degree of support was indicated by an answer of "Both parents approve" to the question, "Do your parents approve of your forthcoming marriage?" given by both members of the dyad. The lowest degree of support was indicated by an answer of "Neither parent approves" given by both members of the dyad to this same question.

Family of orientation refers to the family unit with which the teenagers spent most of their lives, especially those years just prior to marriage. In most cases this was the biological family.

Socio-economic status is an indicator of one's social position based upon such factors as one's economic situation, place and/or type of employment, place of residence and amount of education. Though several well-known

composite indicators of this variable exist, Otto (1975) suggests that occupational prestige is the best single indicator and that composite indicators may result in a loss of meaning. For this study, the socio-economic index, a measure of the prestige of one's occupation, was used as an indicator of socio-economic status of the families of orientation. Tables developed by Reiss et al. (1961) were used to assign numerical values to the occupations of parents in the study.

Education level, another indicator of one's socio-economic status, refers to the number of years of school completed at the time of the follow-up interview. All types of post-high school education, college or vocational training, were treated as equal.

Rural residents refers to those who live in areas composed of farms, open areas, or small towns of less than 2,500 people, the definition used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Urban residents refers to those who live in towns and cities containing 2,500 or more people, the definition used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. All areas were considered either rural or urban solely on the basis of population.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between the degree of parental approval that a couple in a pregnancy provoked teenage

marriage receives and the probability that their marriage will remain intact.

Hypotheses 2: Rural individuals in pregnancy provoked teenage marriages will receive a higher degree of parental approval at marriage than urban individuals.

Hypothesis 3: There is an inverse relationship between the father's socio-economic status and the degree of parental approval at marriage each individual receives.

Hypothesis 4: There is an inverse relationship between the father's level of education and the degree of parental approval at marriage that each individual receives.

To test the above hypotheses, the following null hypotheses were used.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the degree of parental approval that a teenage couple receives and the probability that their marriage will remain intact.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the degree of parental approval at marriage received by rural individuals and urban individuals.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between the father's socio-economic status and the degree of parental approval at marriage received by rural individuals and urban individuals.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between the father's education level and the degree of parental approval at marriage that the individual receives.

Research Questions

In addition to looking at specific relationships, this study offers the opportunity for a preliminary examination of the following:

1. Is there a relationship between the age at which a teenager marries and the probability that the marriage will remain intact?
2. What are the variables that discriminate between intact and dissolved pregnancy provoked teenage marriages?
3. Do very young pregnancy provoked teenage married couples conform more than older teenage married couples to the factors associated with premarital pregnancy reported in earlier research?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature related to teenage marriage, teenage divorce, and teenage pregnancy was reviewed. Because of their close relationship to all three categories above, studies related to premarital pregnancy are included where appropriate.

Studies Related to Teenage Marriage

Approximately one out of eight teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973). Though very little research has been done on the reasons for teenage marriages, several researchers (Reiner & Edwards, 1974; Burchinal, 1965; Lowrie, 1965; Moss and Gingles, 1959) found the primary reason for teenage marriages to be a reaction to, or an escape from, an unsatisfactory home situation. Burchinal (1959) has identified as many as nine possible explanations for early marriage in the United States.

Regardless of the causes, there is a close relationship between teenage pregnancy and teenage marriage. Lowrie (1965) found that 71 percent of all 16 year old

brides, 73 percent of all 17 year old brides, and 83 percent of all 18 year old brides were premaritally pregnant. Pratt (1965) found that premarital pregnancy among teenagers is more likely to be resolved by marriage than it is among older age groups.

Aug and Bright (1970), with samples of rural young women (not all teenagers) of low socio-economic status, found that premarital pregnancy may be considered a developmental stage by some families. According to their interpretation, pregnancy preceding marriage is considered acceptable and may have no adverse effect on the resultant marriage.

Similarly, DeLissovoy (1973), also with a sample of blue-collar, rural teenage couples (most of whom married in response to a premarital pregnancy), found that teenage marriages can be durable. Most of these couples were married in their parent's homes and DeLissovoy suggested that this and other demonstrations of strong parental support were the reasons for a low number of divorces.

Means by which parents may demonstrate their support of their teenager's marriage were suggested by Burchinal (1959). Some parents will give direct financial assistance to the young couple. Some may provide living quarters for the couple within the parent's home. Some will overtly express their approval of the marriage both

at the time of the marriage and in the months and years that follow.

Moss and Gingles (1959), in a study of rural high school marriages (31% were premaritally pregnant), reported that these couples received family support for their marriage. The couples in this study reportedly were not interested in completing their education or in entering college. Interestingly, the married couples did not differ from their unmarried peers with respect to their parent's level of education.

M. LaBarre (1969) also reports that early marriage is an accepted way of life in blue-collar working class families. Girls may follow the example of their mothers, aunts, sisters or friends. There is no strong family goal for higher education or a career for the girl. Nor is there any stigma attached to the pregnancy and early marriage. Her findings are very similar to those of Aug and Bright (1970).

It appears that rural or blue-collar families are more likely to support and accept premarital pregnancy and early marriage than urban or middle and upper socio-economic status families. Strong family support seems to help young married couples remain intact. Rejection by or a lack of support from the parents simply adds to the problems young couples must face. There seems to be some disagreement about the effects of the parent's level of education,

normally considered an indicator of socio-economic status, as a predictor of parental attitudes toward the marriage.

Studies Related to Teenage Divorce

Several reports show the divorce and separation rates for teenage marriages to be much higher than those of other marriages. Part of the reason for this high rate may be directly associated with the ages of those involved and their lack of preparedness for marriage. Another reason would appear to be related to the additional pressures placed on most of these young marriages by premarital pregnancy and the all-too-soon arrival of a third member of the family.

In a record-linkage study, Christensen (1953) found the following disposition-to-divorce ranking:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| highest divorce rate | 1. Delayed marriage following pregnancy |
| | 2. Early marriage following pregnancy |
| | 3. Early pregnancy following marriage |
| lowest divorce rate | 4. Late pregnancy following marriage |

With the high rates of premarital pregnancy reported by Lowrie (1965) it seems that the majority of teenage marriages are in the first two categories listed by Christensen. All of the couples in the present study were in these first two categories and therefore had a high disposition-to-divorce ranking.

In a follow-up to this study, Christensen (1956) found a divorce rate of 18 percent for premaritally pregnant couples, twice the rate for the whole sample. He found that divorced premaritally pregnant couples experienced more tension and conflict with their parents and in-laws, that their parents were more restrictive in regulating dating, and that these couples showed more religiosity and less homogeneity in religious preference than other couples. Coombs et al. (1970), also found the divorce rate for premaritally pregnant couples to be the highest for those with dissimilar religions.

Inselberg (1961), in her study of early marriages (not necessarily pregnancy provoked), listed several problems that were more common among those who married early than among their peers who married later. Among these are (1) disagreements between the wife and her parents, (2) problems between the wife and her in-laws, (3) disagreements about which religion to follow, and (4) problems associated with having low incomes (lower than their peers).

It seems that both teenage marriages and pregnancy provoked marriages have high divorce and separation rates. Therefore, it is not surprising that pregnancy provoked teenage marriages have especially high divorce and separation rates. The relationships between the young couples and their parents, either conflict or varying

degrees of support, appear to be important determinants of the quality of their marital relationship.

Studies Related to Teenage Pregnancy

Although the major thrust of this study is to determine which variables distinguish between those pregnancy provoked teenage marriages that remain intact and those that end in divorce or separation, the data also allow an examination of some of the research findings associated with adolescent premarital pregnancy.

The reasons suggested for the occurrence of premarital pregnancy are many and vary from neuroticism to a result of the increasingly lax sexual standards of American society. Several studies point out possible relationships between demographic data and premarital pregnancy.

For instance, research by Reiner and Edwards (1965), Dame (1966), Prakler and Nelson (1968), and Juhasz (1974) indicate that premaritally pregnant women are more likely to come from homes with missing fathers. Hetherington (1972) supports this view with his finding that girls separated from their fathers are exposed earlier and more frequently to sexual experiences than girls with fathers present in the home. Burchinal (1959b) did not find any support for these father-absence theories.

Other studies point out a relationship between the parent's level of education and the probability that a girl may become premaritally pregnant. Butman and Kamm

(1965) and Coombs (1970) found an inverse relationship between the level of the father's education and the probability that his daughter would become premaritally pregnant. Butman and Kamm (1965) indicated that this probability increased if both parents have less than a high school education. Prakler and Nelson (1965) go even further when they state that premarital pregnancy is inversely proportional to socio-economic status in every ethnic group.

Research on the causes of teenage pregnancy has produced few consistent findings. However, there does appear to be some agreement regarding the relationship between the level of education attained by a girl's parents and her probability for becoming premaritally pregnant. Father absence is believed by many to be a characteristic of girls who are premaritally pregnant.

Summary of the Literature

There is a strong relationship between teenage marriage and premarital pregnancy. Christensen (1953) found a relationship between premarital pregnancy and marital instability. However, in a group in which each couple married in reaction to a premarital pregnancy, what are the determinants of marital stability or instability?

Answers or partial answers to this question have been suggested. Several researchers (Moss & Gingles, 1959; Inselberg, 1961; Burchinal, 1959; M. LaBarre, 1969; Aug & Bright, 1970) indicate either directly or

indirectly that family support of the young married couple is a factor in the stability of the marriage. Several of these same researchers also indicate that such family support is more likely to be forthcoming when the families of orientation are classified as rural, blue collar, or of below average education levels. However, these relationships have not been tested; they are drawn from the researchers' descriptions of their samples.

Thus, the hypotheses of this study are based upon these earlier findings to determine if the relationships suggested by them are statistically significant and therefore of practical use in a predictive capacity.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This chapter outlines the design of the study: the methodology is described, the instruments are discussed, and the measurement of the variables and the methods of analysis are explained. The chapter ends with a description of the population, the sampling procedure, and the response.

Methodology

For the purpose of examining the research problem, this project employed the method of self-administered questionnaires and telephone interviews. The self-administered questionnaires were completed one to three years prior to the present study by all subjects at the time of their initial interview with Dr. David Rolfe, a marriage counselor who works with young couples assigned to him by the Probate Court in Ingham County.

The telephone interview method was chosen for the follow-up survey because: (1) a high degree of cooperation was demanded by the relatively small size of the prospective sample, and (2) it was assumed that the sample

would be widely scattered geographically. Telephone interviews are known to produce high cooperation rates (Borg & Gall, 1971: 189) and are a relatively inexpensive and efficient method of collecting data from geographically scattered groups.

The Instruments

The background data for this study were collected by Dr. Rolfe in his work with teenage marriage license applicants assigned to him by the Ingham County Probate Court. All such applicants are given a series of self-administered questionnaires. The background data used in this study are from the first of these questionnaires, The Marriage Readiness Questionnaire (D. J. Rolfe, 1974). This instrument (Appendix A, pages 67-71) sought demographic data about each applicant and his or her family as well as some attitudinal data.

The follow-up instrument was a pre-coded questionnaire concerned with demographic data and a measurement of perceived parental attitudes toward the young couple's marriage. This instrument (Appendix B, pages 72-76) required approximately five minutes to administer to a subject. Whenever possible, it was administered to both members of a couple during a single phone call to limit the opportunity for discussion of the attitudinal items.

Measure of Variables

Marital Status

In the follow-up instrument, this variable was measured by asking each individual about their current relationship with the person with whom they had applied for a marriage license. The answers were categorized as marriage intact, separated less than one month, separated for more than one month, or divorced. For analysis purposes, these categories were collapsed into two categories, either intact or dissolved.

Intact marriages were those in which the couple stated they were married or separated for less than one month. Dissolved marriages were those in which the couple had been separated (for reasons other than death, employment or military service) for more than one month or who had obtained a divorce. Couples with separations of at least one month were included in the "dissolved" category because of the short duration of all of these marriages and the time required for obtaining a legal divorce. To define dissolved marriages as only those with legal divorces would have unrealistically measured the discord that existed in many of these recent marriages.

Degree of Parental Approval

For individuals, the degree of parental approval was determined by the response to item number 20 of the

Marriage Readiness Questionnaire (Appendix A, pages 67-71). If the response was "Both parents approve," a high degree of approval was indicated; if only one parent approved, a low degree of approval was indicated; if neither parent approved, no approval was indicated.

Individual responses were adjusted to remove any indications of lack of approval that resulted from parents who were missing due to divorce or death. For example, if only one parent were living and the response was that only one parent approved of the marriage, this was adjusted to a high degree of approval since there was no one showing disapproval. Similar adjustments were made in the case of subjects of divorced or separated parents. No adjustment was made if the response was "Neither parent approves."

The degree of parental approval for a couple was determined by combining the adjusted degree of approval for each individual. The highest degree of approval for a couple was found when each received a high degree of approval. The next category indicated that one individual had received a high degree of approval and the other had received a low degree of approval. The third category consisted of couples in which both received a low degree of approval or in which one received a high degree of approval and the other received no approval. The fourth category included couples in which one received a low degree of approval and the other received none. The fifth category

consisted of couples who received no approval from any parent.

Locale

In the follow-up instrument, each individual was asked to describe the area in which they spent most of their lives prior to marriage. The responses were dichotomized into areas that were either rural (farms, ranch, open country, or towns of less than 2,500 people) or urban (towns of 2,500 people or more, cities, and suburbs).

Socio-Economic Index

Using tables developed by Reiss et al. (1961), a number was assigned each person (subject, subject's father, subject's mother) indicating the relative prestige of that person's occupation, as described by the subject. For analysis, these rankings were divided into quartiles, with a different scale being used for each group.

Level of Education

Each subject was asked about the number of years of school completed. The same question was asked about the subject's parents. The results of these questions were then classified into four categories:

1. Completed eight years or less
2. Completed some high school or graduated from high school

3. Completed some college or technical training or graduated from college
4. Completed five or more years of college

Methods of Analysis

The data from the background instrument were transferred to coding sheets prior to being key punched onto cards. The follow-up instrument was pre-coded allowing key punching directly from the instrument. All data were analyzed on the Michigan State University CDC 6500 using the procedures of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. All hypotheses were tested by using chi-square analysis and the contingency coefficient C with $\alpha = .05$. Of all the measures of association available when using chi-square analysis, the contingency coefficient C was chosen because it had the best combination of flexibility and power for these testing situations.

The Population

The population of this study consisted of all pregnancy provoked teenage married couples in Ingham County, Michigan, in which at least one of the members was 18 years of age or less, who had been married for a period of between one and three years at the time of the study (August, 1976).

It is not known how well the population is representative of pregnancy provoked teenage marriages across

the nation. Though this population is much more diverse than samples used in previous research, which are usually composed of fairly homogeneous groups by race, place of residence, and social class, one important factor suggests the possibility of the uniqueness of the group. In Ingham County, Michigan, all couples, in which either or both are under 18 years old, who apply for marriage licenses, must do so through the Probate Court. For several years, the Probate Court judges have assigned each couple to a marriage counselor for premarital screening. Only those couples deemed "good risks" by the marriage counselors are granted licenses.

The procedures of the Probate Court affect the population in two ways: (1) if the procedures are successful, only couples with a high probability of remaining intact will be granted licenses, and (2) some young couples who would have resolved a pregnancy by marriage may not apply, or, if they apply, may not complete the screening procedure. Those couples who are granted licenses may differ greatly from those who apply and are denied licenses and from those who do not apply because of the procedures or who do not complete the procedures.

Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

The sampling procedure began with a list of all teenage couples (70) referred to Dr. Rolfe's attention by the Probate Court over a three year span, from 1973 to

1975 (Dr. Rolfe handles approximately half of all such cases). Since there were no indications of the results of each case, an attempt was made to contact all 70 couples. Of these, eleven couples could not be located and were never contacted. Of the remaining 59 couples, eight did not marry whether or not a license was granted, six married too late (less than a year prior to the study) to be included, four did not have a child within the first seven months of marriage (it is not known whether there was no pregnancy at the time of marriage or the pregnancy was resolved in some manner other than live birth), and one couple, who were cohabiting though not married (it is not known whether or not they were granted a license nor whether they had a child) refused to participate.

Forty of the couples contacted met all the criteria for the study and compose the sample used in this project. In 35 cases, the husband and wife were contacted. In five cases, only one spouse could be contacted; for four of these only the wife was available for the study. Divorce, prolonged separation and military service were the reasons for these single contacts.

The list of 70 couples also included addresses and/or phone numbers for most of the individuals on the list. In most cases, these addresses or phone numbers were those of the parents of the individuals, one, two, or three years prior to the study. The phone numbers were used in

the first contact attempts. Outdated phone numbers were updated, whenever possible, by means of the local directory. (Since the names of the parents were not included, this was possible only when the parents had the same last name as the child, lived at the address they had when the application was made, and the phone number was a listed number.) Some couples were contacted directly by using the local directory.

In one case in which no phone was available, a wife (of a separated couple) was contacted in person. The appointment was made through the woman's parents.

For all couples who were not located, letters, marked Please Forward and containing letters explaining the nature of the project and reply postcards, were sent to them at their parent's last known address. Only one reply was received. Since no phone was available, a questionnaire was sent by mail, completed and returned. These data are not part of that used in the study because the couple had married too late to be part of the study.

Table 1.--Response Description.

Subject Category	Number	Percent of Total
Potential Sample	70	100
Not Located	11	15.7
Located	59	84.3
Located--Not part of sample	19	27.1
Did Not Marry	8	11.4
Married Less Than One Year	6	8.6
No Child Born Within the First Seven Months of Marriage	4	5.7
Refusal	1	1.4
Located--Met All Criteria	40	57.1
Both Spouses Contacted	35	87.5 (of 40)
Wife Only Contacted	4	10 (of 40)
Husband Only Contacted	1	2.5 (of 40)

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Subjects

The subjects of this study were 40 couples (80 persons) who married when at least one member of the dyad was 18 years old or less. The average age of all subjects at the time of their marriage was 17.7 years; 17.2 years for the females (ranging from 15.0 to 21.6) and 18.3 for the males (ranging from 16.6 to 23.9). The average age of the youngest member of each dyad was 16.8 years. See Table 1, Appendix C for additional information in tabular form.

The subjects were reared in families with an average of more than five children. Males had from one to fifteen siblings; females from one to nine. No subject was an only child. Most of these families lived in urban areas. For additional information, see Tables 2 and 3, Appendix C.

At the time of marriage, 23 (28%) of the subjects were from families in which at least one of the subject's biological parents was missing. Of these 23, one had been adopted, 19 were from homes in which the parents were

divorced, 1 was from a home in which the father was deceased, and 3 were from homes in which the mother was deceased. After disruption of, or displacement from, the family of orientation, 8 subjects lived in families headed by the mother alone, 1 lived in a family headed by the father alone, 4 lived with their mother and step-father, 3 lived with their father and step-mother, 3 lived part-time with each parent, 1 lived alone and 1 cohabited.

The mothers of the subjects averaged 45.3 years of age, had completed an average of 11.3 years of school, and 35 of them worked outside the home at least part of the time during the subject's childhood. The fathers averaged 48.4 years of age, had completed 11.8 years of school, and 68 of them were known to be employed at the time the subject was married.

At the time of the marriage, the subjects had known each other an average of 28.9 months and had been engaged for 5.3 months. Most subjects reported that both parents approved of the marriage, as shown in Table 2.

The early termination of one's education or the loss of educational opportunities is often cited as one of the great tragedies of early marriage or childbearing. Though, as Table 3 shows, marriage and childbearing did occur when the educational levels were quite low (a mean of 10.4 years), education does not have to end at this time. Thirty-eight (48%) of the subjects completed at

Table 2.--Parental Approval of the Marriage as Reported by the Subjects Prior to the Marriage.

Degree of Approval	Males	Females	Females (Adjusted for Missing Parents)
Both Parents Approve	38 (90%)	28 (70%)	33 (83%)
Only the Mother Approves	0	8 (20%)	5 (13%)
Only the Father Approves	0	2 (5%)	0
Neither Parent Approves	0	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Other	2 (10%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)

least one year of school after their marriage and 23 (29%) were involved in an education program at the time of the follow-up study. Still, the mean education level of the subjects (11.0 for females, 11.3 for males, 11.1 overall) is lower than that of their parents.

Twenty-nine of the couples had one child and eleven couples had two children, at the time of the follow-up study. The average time span between the time of marriage and the birth of the first child was less than one month. Some births occurred more than one year prior to marriage.

The dissolution rate of these marriages, shown in Table 4, is quite low for premaritally pregnant teenagers, especially when compared with rates of 50 to 75 percent reported in other studies. This low dissolution rate is

Table 3.--Education Level of the Subjects.

Years Completed	Females at Marriage	Females Now	Males at Marriage	Males Now	All Subjects at Marriage	All Subjects Now
8	1 (2%)				1 (1%)	
9	10 (25%)	4 (10%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)	15 (19%)	5 (8%)
10	14 (35%)	12 (31%)	17 (42%)	10 (26%)	31 (39%)	22 (29%)
11	9 (22%)	5 (13%)	10 (25%)	6 (16%)	19 (24%)	11 (14%)
12	6 (15%)	16 (41%)	6 (15%)	18 (47%)	12 (15%)	34 (44%)
13		2 (5%)	1 (2%)		1 (1%)	2 (3%)
14			1 (2%)	1 (3%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
15				1 (3%)		1 (1%)
N =	40	39*	40	38†	80	77

*11 females were enrolled in an education program.

†12 males were enrolled in an education program.

Table 4.--Status of the Marriages.

Status	
Intact	33 (83%)
Separated less than one month	<u>1</u> (2%)
INTACT	34 (85%)
Separated more than one month	5 (13%)
Divorced	<u>1</u> (2%)
DISSOLVED	6 (15%)

not entirely explained by the short duration (1-3 years) of the marriages. As Table 5 indicates, there were more dissolutions in the most recent cohort (couples married for 1 year) than in either group that had married earlier.

Two possible explanations for this low dissolution rate are:

1. The screening and counseling procedures of the Probate Court and the marriage counselor were successful in recognizing most high risk couples who applied for licenses. Then the court either denied these couples licenses or their marital stability was improved through premarital counseling.

2. The distribution obtained was partially a phenomenon of the timing of the study. Several couples mentioned that they had experienced marital difficulties

Table 5.--Marital Status by the Number of Years Married.

		Number of Years Married		
		1	2	3
Marital Status	Intact	12	13	9
	Dissolved	3	2	1

and had separated one or more times, some for as long as four months. Some of these had been reconciled only a week or two prior to being contacted by the interviewer. One couple was separated at the time that the first spouse was contacted. By the time the second spouse was located, the couple had reunited after a separation of about two months. In addition, one of the "intact" couples mentioned that they were discussing the possibility of obtaining a divorce, though continuing to live together. Conversely, another couple who had been separated for about three months agreed that they would reunite as soon as the husband was able to find full time employment. Therefore, had these couples been contacted six months before or six months after the present study, quite a different distribution might have been found, especially in the two "separated" categories. However, except for the one couple mentioned above, the couples in the "separated one month or more" category generally considered their relationship terminated and in many of the cases the whereabouts of the spouse

was unknown. The situations mentioned here suggest that any static measurement of the marital status of these couples may not adequately reflect the degree of instability that exists. Perhaps this inadequacy could be corrected in future research by attempting to determine if, how many times, and for how long each time, a couple had been separated during the previous year.

Tests of Hypotheses

From the literature on teenage marriages, it seemed that one variable associated with successful early marriages was parental support:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the degree of parental approval that a teenage couple received and the probability that their marriage will remain intact.

The results of the test of this hypothesis are found in Table 6. Since $\alpha = .05$ was used for all hypothesis tests, there was not a significant difference between the intact and dissolved groups and the degree of approval received. There is almost no relationship between these variables as indicated by the contingency coefficient C. In fact, contrary to the hypothesized relationship, most couples in the dissolved group reported that they received the highest degree of parental approval regarding their marriage.

Table 6.--Marital Status by Degree of Parental Approval Received by the Couple.

		Degree of Parental Approval				
		Highest Degree of Approval		Lowest Degree of Approval		
Marital Status	Intact	28	3	1	0	0
	Dissolved	6	1	0	0	0

Chi Square = .644 Contingency Coefficient C = .13

P > .95

df = 4

N = 37

One possible explanation of this finding may be found in Table 3. Among the males, none reported receiving less than the highest degree of parental approval. For the females, once their choices are adjusted to account for missing parents due to death or divorce, very few report less than the highest degree of approval. It seems that this question about parental approval may not provide any discrimination between individuals and may, in fact, elicit only socially desirable answers. Alternatively, the subjects may have interpreted the question to mean, "Do my parents think that I should get married because I'm pregnant (because I'm the father of her child)?" a question of social responsibility, instead of, "Are my parents pleased that I'm getting married?" an evaluation of the act itself.

Some support for the argument that this question about parental support did not measure the desired concept may be found in Table 7. In the follow-up interview, each individual was asked to recall their parents' attitudes toward the marriage. Obviously these results do not agree with those in Table 3, though each measure would appear to be an indicator of parental support.

The lack of a distribution of subjects on the parental approval dimension reduces this variable's ability to discriminate between individuals and its usefulness as either an independent or dependent variable for hypothesis testing. Since the parental attitude variable appears to offer more meaningful data, it would be worthwhile to know if this variable could be used as a predictor of marital stability. For these reasons, the first and all subsequent hypotheses have also been tested by using the attitudinal data from Table 7. Individual attitude measures were averaged (in such a way that missing parents did not negatively influence the results) to produce single measures for the parents of either subject or for the parents of both.

In Table 8, the results of testing the first hypothesis with the follow-up data are shown. Though no significant statistical differences are found, the patterns of the three distributions are informative. In only one instance did an individual or couple whose parents held

Table 7.--Parents' Original Attitudes, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriages.

Attitudes Toward Marriages						
	Highly Favorable	Favorable	Neutral	Doubtful	Unfavorable	N
Male's Parents						
Father	4 (11%)	15 (42%)	11 (31%)	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	36
Mother	7 (20%)	11 (31%)	8 (23%)	7 (20%)	2 (6%)	35
Female's Parents						
Father	6 (16%)	8 (22%)	13 (35%)	4 (11%)	6 (16%)	37
Mother	8 (23%)	11 (28%)	5 (13%)	10 (26%)	4 (10%)	38

Table 8.--Marital Status by Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage.

		Attitude			
		Highly Favorable	Favorable	Neutral	Doubtful Unfavorable
Parents of Both					
Marital Status	Intact	0	11	14	7 2
	Dissolved	0	0	4	1 1
Chi Square = 3.506		C = .28	P > .50	df = 4	N = 40
Parents of the Male					
	Intact	4	13	8	5 3
	Dissolved	0	1	2	0 0
Chi Square = 2.594		C = .26	P > .60	df = 4	N = 36
Parents of the Female					
	Intact	5	9	9	7 4
	Dissolved	0	0	3	1 1
Chi Square = 4.09		C = .31	P > .40	df = 4	N = 39

favorable or highly favorable attitudes toward the marriage have a dissolved marriage. This indicates that favorable parental attitudes might be good predictors of marital stability. However, as Table 8 shows, negative parental attitudes do not necessarily predict marital instability, especially for males. It is interesting to notice that the highest dissolution rate for males, females, or couples is for those whose parents have a neutral attitude toward the marriage.

Two factors weaken any conclusions that may be drawn from the tests in Table 8. First the small sample size produces correspondingly small cell sizes, so that small changes in a distribution may produce large statistical changes. The low dissolution rates compounds this problem. (One method of overcoming the problem of small cell sizes is to collapse the dimensions of one of the variables. The first hypothesis was tested by collapsing the attitude scale into favorable and unfavorable dimensions. No significant differences were found. See Appendix C, Table 4.) Secondly, the missing cases in the individual data are predominantly the spouses of dissolved marriages; i.e., the data most important to the tests are missing or incomplete.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the degree of parental approval at marriage received by rural teenagers and urban teenagers.

Table 9 indicates that there is no significant difference between these two groups regarding parental approval at marriage for either males or females. Once again, the complete lack of distribution for males on the parental approval scale and the minimal amount of distribution for females reduces the discriminability of this variable.

Table 9.--Parental Approval by the Primary Place of Residence During Childhood.

	Males		Females	
	Place of Residence			
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Highest Degree	7	28	7	25
Degree of Parental Approval	0	0	0	5
	0	0	0	0
Lowest Degree	0	0	0	1

Chi Square and C cannot be calculated.

Chi Square = 1.603 C = .20
P > .60 df = 3 N = 38

When Hypothesis 2 is tested using the retrospective attitudinal data from the follow-up study, as was done with Hypothesis 1, the results displayed in Table 10 are obtained. Though no significant differences are found, for males there is a trend in the hypothesized direction;

Table 10.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Primary Place of Residence During Childhood.

		Males Place of Residence		Females	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Parent's Attitude Toward the Marriage	Unfavorable	1	2	0	5
	Doubtful	0	5	3	5
	Neutral	1	8	2	10
	Favorable	5	9	2	7
	Highly Favorable	0	4	0	5

Chi Square = 5.067 C = .36 Chi Square = 4.379 C = .32
P > .20 df = 4 N = 34 P > .30 df = 4 N = 39

i.e., only 2 of the parents of males from rural areas had less than a favorable attitude toward the marriage, while for urban males the figure is 15 out of 28. For females the trend is not as strong. (The results of testing with a collapsed attitude scale are shown in Table 5, Appendix C.)

A major weakness of all the tests dealing with the rural-urban dimension, other than the small sample size already mentioned, is the small percentage (18%) of the sample who are classified as being from rural areas. The distribution of such a small group may not be representative of rural couples in general and any change in

the distribution could produce large statistical changes. Secondly, it was found that the rural-urban dichotomy is too simplistic when based solely on population. Blue and white collar urban workers who commute from rural areas may be more similar to persons living in urban and suburban areas than those who live and work in rural areas.

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between the father's socio-economic status and the degree of parental approval at marriage that the teenager receives.

In Table 11, the results of the test of this hypothesis with the parental approval data are seen. Once again, the failure of the parental approval dimension to discriminate between individuals is seen and no significant difference is found.

In Table 12, the results of testing Hypothesis 3 using the retrospective attitudinal data are shown. Though no significant relationship is found, the pattern that emerges is important. As hypothesized, teenagers from the two lower socio-economic groups have a higher probability of receiving a positive reaction from their parents toward the marriage than teenagers from the two higher groups. This pattern is much more marked for males than females, though it is not statistically significant for either. While this pattern does exist, it does not indicate that a majority of males or females in the two higher groups

Table 11.--Parental Approval by the Father's Socio-Economic Index.

		Males				Females			
		Socio-Economic Index by Quartiles							
		Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile	Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile	Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile	Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile
Degree of Parental Approval	Lowest Degree	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0
	Highest Degree	17	6	7	4	12	10	5	6
<hr/>									
Chi Square and the Contingency C cannot									
Chi Square = 7.413 C = .40									
be calculated. N = 34 P > .60 df = 9 N = 39									

Table 12.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Father's Socio-Economic Index.

Father's Socio-Economic Index by Quartiles									
Males					Females				
		Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile	Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile			Lowest Quartile	Highest Quartile
Parent's Attitude Toward the Marriage	Unfavorable	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	1
	Doubtful	1	1	2	1	3	2	3	1
	Neutral	6	2	1	0	4	4	1	3
	Favorable	5	4	2	3	2	3	3	1
	Highly Favorable	4	0	0	0	3	1	1	0

Chi Square = 12.271 C = .51 Chi Square = 5.166 C = .34

P > .30 df = 12 N = 35 P > .95 df = 12 N = 39

of the socio-economic index have parents with negative attitudes toward their marriage.

The small sample and cell sizes of these tests weaken any conclusions that might be drawn from them. (See Table 6, Appendix C, for a test of this hypothesis using collapsed scales.) Another weakness might be the large endorsement of the neutral category, which cannot be readily translated. Perhaps the elimination of this category, which would force the subjects to choose between the positive and negative categories, would make the data more meaningful. The results are also affected by the fact that such a small percentage of the subjects fall into the higher socio-economic index categories.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between the father's education level and the degree of parental approval at marriage that the teenager receives.

When Hypothesis 4 was tested with the parental approval data, no significant differences were found, as Table 13 shows. The lack of distribution of the subjects on this dimension renders this test meaningless.

When Hypothesis 4 was tested using the parental attitude data, the results shown in Table 14 were obtained. Though no significant differences were found, the pattern of the distribution for males is in the hypothesized direction. That is, males whose fathers

Table 13.--Parental Approval by the Father's Educational Level.

	Males				Females			
	Father's Educational Level in Years Completed				Father's Educational Level in Years Completed			
	8 or Less	9-12	13-16	16 or More	8 or Less	9-12	13-16	16 or More
Lowest	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Degree of Parental Approval	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0
Highest	10	19	6	3	8	17	5	3
Chi Square and the Contingency Coefficient					Chi Square = 2.703 C = .25			
C cannot be calculated					P > .95 df = 9 N = 39			

Table 14.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Father's Educational Level.

		Males				Females			
		Father's Educational Level in Years Completed							
		8 or Less	9-12	13-16	More Than 16	8 or Less	9-12	13-16	More Than 16
Unfavorable		1	1	1	0	1	3	0	1
Doubtful		1	1	3	0	3	4	1	0
Neutral		3	6	0	1	2	6	3	1
Favorable		2	9	1	2	2	5	1	1
Highly Favorable		1	3	0	0	0	5	0	0

Chi Square = 15.330 C = .55 Chi Square = 8.187 C = .42

P > .20 df = 12 N = 36 P > .70 df = 12 N = 39

have only a high school education, or less, have a higher probability that their parents will have a positive attitude toward the marriage than males whose fathers have more than a high school education. For females this pattern is reversed.

The small cell and sample sizes weaken any conclusions that can be drawn from the data. (See Table 7, Appendix C, for a test of Hypothesis 4 using collapsed scales.) The fact that less than 25 percent of the sample falls into the two higher education groups compounds this problem. The large number of subjects who indicated neutral parental attitudes also adds confusion to the meaning of these distributions.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to allow examination of the data from the sample to determine if trends may be found that would suggest hypotheses for further research or allow further comparisons with the findings of other research.

1. Is there a relationship between the age at which a teenager marries and the probability that the marriage will remain intact?

Table 15 shows the distribution of marital status by the age of marriage. For both males and females, more dissolutions occur at the younger ages. It appears that marriages for males or females who are 18 or older are

Table 15.--Marital Status by the Age at Marriage.

		Males--Age at Marriage							
		16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Marital Status	Intact	2	17	7	6	1	1	0	0
	Dissolved	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1

Chi Square = 17.886 C = .56

P > .02 df = 7 N = 40

		Females--Age at Marriage						
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Marital Status	Intact	9	8	6	6	2	2	1
	Dissolved	0	4	2	0	0	0	0

Chi Square = 7.320 C = .39

P > .40 df = 7 N = 40

much more stable than the marriages of those who are younger. Notable exceptions to this trend are the two oldest males, whose marriages to 16 year old brides are dissolved and the 15 year old brides who, though they compose almost one-fourth of the females in the sample, have experienced no dissolutions. The stability of the marriages of the latter group is contrary to the findings of all previous research which would suggest that this group would be the least stable. (It should be noted that one-third of this group had been married three years, one-third for two years, and one-third for one year prior to this study.)

2. What are the variables that discriminate between intact and dissolved pregnancy provoked marriages?

Because of the small sample size and the low dissolution rate for this sample, any answers to this question must be considered tentative and speculative. However, any patterns that emerge from an examination of the data may lead to further research questions and eventually to the desired answers. To explore this question, two subgroups will be compared to one another and to the sample as a whole. The first subgroup, the Dissolved Subgroup, will include all those persons in marriages classified as dissolved ($N = 6$ couples). A limited number of comparisons can be made with this subgroup since a large proportion of this group were not located during the

follow-up study. The second subgroup, the 15 Year Old Subgroup, consists of the 15 year old brides and their husbands (N = 9 couples). This subgroup is of interest because it contains the youngest members of the sample, the subgroup is the most stable subgroup in the sample though all predictions would seem to make them the least stable, and, therefore, the ingredients of a stable pregnancy provoked teenage marriage should be more apparent than for any other subgroup. Only the differences between these groups will be described below.

The average age difference between spouses for the sample is only 1.1 years, while for the Dissolved Subgroup it is 2.6 years (this figure is somewhat misleading since four couples were approximately the same age and two couples had age differences of six and seven years) and for the 15 Year Old Subgroup it is 3.4 years. An older, more mature spouse may give a young marriage more stability by providing leadership and easier access to economic resources (the job market). However, if the age difference is too great, the couple may find that they do not have a common frame of reference and this difference overcomes the advantage of having an older spouse. If this speculation is correct, it is in contrast to the findings of Judson and Mary Landis (1958) that, for couples in which one spouse is under 20, marital stability is highest if the other spouse is over 23, not as high if the other spouse

is between 20 and 23, and is lowest if both are under 20. The example of the two subgroups in this study would suggest that perhaps there is an age difference beyond which marital stability begins to decrease.

Though large families (an average of more than five children) are typical of the families of orientation of all subjects, the husbands in the Dissolved Subgroup have even larger families of orientations (mean = 5.8 children), while the husbands of the 15 Year Old Subgroup have smaller than average families of orientation (mean = 4.5 children). For the wives, the family sizes are similar to those of the whole sample. However, among the 15 year old wives, the youngest girl or the youngest child is overrepresented.

One interesting difference between the two subgroups lies in the amount of time the spouses knew each other and were engaged prior to their marriage. For the sample, the marriage partners knew each other about 29 months before marriage; for the Dissolved Subgroup, about 51 months (the males report over 54 months but the females report 48); for the 15 Year Old Subgroup, about 11 months. The length of the engagements was about 5 months for the sample, almost 6 months for the Dissolved Subgroup, and about 1 month for the 15 Year Old Subgroup.

There is a difference between the groups in terms of employment. Whereas almost three-fourths of the males in the sample and all the husbands in the 15 Year Old

Subgroup were employed, only one of the three husbands (for whom data are available) of the Dissolved Group was employed. Unemployment or extremely low income is one of the problems that Inselberg (1961) cited as common among early marriages. The data from this study, as well as comments by the wives of the Dissolved Subgroup, indicate that unemployment is a more common problem for those in unstable marriages.

Table 16 contains a description of the educational attainment of the parents of the subgroups. Though the missing data for the males of the Dissolved Subgroup reduces its utility, some comparisons are interesting. Though the parents of the Dissolved Subgroup have higher education levels than the parents of the 15 Year Old Subgroup, the parents of the 15 Year Old Subgroup generally have higher job status than their counterparts in the Dissolved Subgroup. It is also interesting to notice that the males of the 15 Year Old Subgroup had completed more years of school than either of their parents while the males of the Dissolved Subgroup had not equalled their parents' educational levels at the time of the marriage.

It is interesting to speculate that the parents of the 15 Year Old Subgroup may have more in common with the young parents than the parents of the dissolved couples. That is, they also have lower education levels, are aware of the economic struggle that this implies, and have been

Table 16.--Description of the Parents of the Dissolved and
15 Year Old Subgroups.

	Average Years of School Completed	Average Socio- Economic Index (Reiss, 1961)
Dissolved Subgroup	N = ()	N = ()
Males	10.8 (6)*	22.0 (3)
Fathers	11.0 (1)	19.5 (3)
Mothers	12.0 (2)	15.7 (3)
Females	9.8 (6)*	4.8 (5)
Fathers	12.2 (5)	23.0 (5)
Mothers	12.0 (5)	28.0 (5)
15 Year Old Subgroup	N = 9	N = 9
Males	11.0*	17.6
Fathers	9.3	33.7
Mothers	9.0	40.6
Females	9.1*	13.1
Fathers	11.6	34.2
Mothers	11.0	26.0

*Education level at the time of the marriage.

relatively successful in spite of this supposed handicap. Their son or son-in-law has, in most cases, completed at least as much education as they have. For these reasons, they may better understand the couples' struggles, the couple themselves may be better prepared for this particular lifestyle, and all involved may have fewer expectations and aspirations for the couple in terms of education, employment and status. For the dissolved couples, if these aspirations are both present in their parents and ingrained within themselves, it could be a source of frustration and tension between the couple and between them and their parents. The fact that more of the Dissolved Subgroup are in school (63% vs 28%) and that they have experienced more of an educational gain since marriage than the 15 Year Old Subgroup may be evidence of their striving for these goals.

3. Do very young pregnancy provoked married couples conform more than older teenage married couples to the factors associated with premarital pregnancy reported in earlier research?

Those variables (broken homes, missing fathers, low social status, low education level of the parents) associated with teenage premarital pregnancy in previous research do not seem to be more typical of the 15 Year Old Subgroup than of the entire sample or the Dissolved Group. In fact, the Dissolved Subgroup experienced more broken or disrupted homes (43% vs 17%) and came from families of lower social status than the 15 Year Old Subgroup.

Therefore, there does not seem to be a greater association of these variables with the youngest teenage pregnancies, at least not for the sample used in this study. However, it should also be noted that intact homes, high social status and high educational attainment by the parents do not preclude the occurrence of teenage premarital pregnancy, early marriage or marital stability.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Adolescent pregnancy, early marriage and, often, divorce are highly researched and little understood phenomena. Research attention has focused primarily on the girl, reasons for early marriage, possible reasons for the pregnancy and the girl's decision-making regarding pregnancy resolution and future use of contraception. Less interest has been given to the marriages that often result from adolescent pregnancy, the stability or instability of these marriages, or the possible sources of stability or instability in these marriages.

Several descriptive studies indicated that intact early marriages received positive support from the parents of the couple involved. Neither the type or amount of support were well defined. However, it seemed logical to use this variable, parental support, as both a dependent and an independent variable in this study. Specific demographic variables (rural/urban residence, father's education level, and father's socio-economic level) were predicted to be associated with parental support.

When used as an independent variable, it was hypothesized that couples receiving a high degree of parental approval at marriage were more likely to remain intact than those couples receiving a lower degree of approval.

To research this problem empirically, 70 couples were sought who had participated in the premarital screening required of underage (less than 18 years old) marriage license applicants. Of the 59 couples located, 40 met the criterion of (a) being married, (b) having married when at least one partner was 18 or less, and (c) giving birth to their first child within 7 months of the marriage date. Background data were available from the marriage counselor. Current data were obtained during a telephone follow-up study. Hypotheses were tested using chi square analysis with the contingency coefficient C as a measure of association.

None of the hypotheses were supported by the results of the study. This failure to find support for any of the hypotheses was explained, in part, by the highly skewed distribution of the subjects' responses to the question about parental approval. The overwhelming majority indicated that they received relatively high degrees of parental approval.

However, even when the hypotheses were tested using as an indicator of parental support the parents' original

attitudes, in retrospect, toward the marriage as reported in the follow-up study, none of the hypotheses were supported. In general, the patterns that emerged indicated that strong parental support is associated with marital stability, but lack of parental support does not necessarily indicate marital instability. All the predicted patterns were stronger for the males than the females, but none reached statistical significance.

Further analysis of the data led to the following tentative findings:

1. The marital instability of teenage marriages is not directly related to the age at marriage. The data suggest however that a slightly older spouse, probably one who has left school and become established as a member of the labor force, will bring enough maturity and economic security to the marriage to greatly improve the stability of the union.
2. For dissolved couples, the males tend to have less education than their parents, to be more involved with furthering their education and less involved in the labor force than males in intact marriages. These data seem to suggest that the educational and social expectations of the male and his parents directly conflict with the interruption of his education brought about by the early

marriage. This would be a source of tension between the spouses, as well as between the wife and her in-laws. However, if this situation is indeed related to marital instability, it is not clear whether it is the lack of resources due to occupational instability or unemployment, the conflict between expectations and reality, or a combination of both that is the source of this instability.

3. Those variables (broken homes, missing fathers, low social status, low education level of the parents) that have been associated with teenage pregnancy and early marriage in the literature were not dominant characteristics of the sample as a whole. These variables did appear to be more typical of those in dissolved marriages than the whole sample.

It is interesting to note that this study failed to support the findings of Aug and Bright (1970) and DeLissovoy (1973) regarding the importance of parental support as an influence on the stability of teenage marriages. In contrast to the findings of the Landises (1958), marital stability does not seem to be directly related to the age at marriage nor does the presence of a post-teenage spouse necessarily increase the stability of a marriage with a teenager. Finally broken homes, missing fathers and low

social status, which have been associated with teenage pregnancy and marriage by Reiner and Edwards (1965), Dame (1966), Prakler and Nelson (1968), and Juhasz, may actually be more indicative of a subgroup of pregnancy provoked teenage marriages: those with the highest probability of experiencing marital difficulties. Because of the limitations mentioned below, all of these findings must be considered tentative until further research is done on these questions.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were: (1) the small sample size and the highly skewed distributions of the sample on the parental-approval and urban/rural dimensions weakened any conclusions that could be drawn from these analyses; (2) the effect of pre-marital counseling upon the marital stability of the sample is difficult to ascertain since complete data on the rejected couples are unavailable; (3) the untested operationalization of parental support led to one variable (parental approval of the marriage) that failed to discriminate and another (parental attitude toward the marriage) that was based upon the recall of a third person; (4) the use of the census definition of the urban/rural dichotomy overlooked all aspects of this dimension except population and, if this variable is a discriminator between lifestyles or value orientations, other indicators are needed in this complex,

mobile society; (5) the operationalization of marital stability into an intact/dissolved dichotomy disregarded such important indicators as the number and length of separations; (6) the short time span between the time of marriage and the time of the follow-up interview may tend to understate the degree of marital instability experienced by these couples; and (7) the use of a neutral category in the parental attitude scale did not produce the same degree of discrimination that a forced-choice between the favorable and unfavorable categories may have produced.

Implications

The primary implication of this project for future research in this area would be the advisability of using larger samples and, whenever possible, one or more comparison groups, such as "peers who married post adolescence" or "peers who married post adolescence and were/were not premaritally pregnant." The use of such comparison groups, even with samples as small as that used in this study, would greatly increase the researcher's ability to determine which attributes of marital instability are associated with age and which are associated with premarital pregnancy.

The need for a more sensitive measure of marital stability/instability than the intact/dissolved dichotomy is also indicated. Such an indicator might incorporate not just the present status of the couple (intact or

separated) but such variables as the number and length of separations experienced by the couple, the reasons for the separations and the reasons for reconciliations.

More data are needed to determine the role of the educational and/or social expectations of the teenage couple and their parents in the couple's marital stability. How do these expectations affect the amount/kind of resources available to the couple, the degree of openness of the families of orientation to the other spouse, and the interpersonal relationship of the couple?

It would be instructive to locate the sample used in this study again in five years or so. Then one could assess the validity of the present findings. It would also be quite useful to include data from persons rejected by the screening process as well as those who drop out in future studies to determine what, if any, are the differences between these two groups. These and other steps should be taken to evaluate the effectiveness of the Ingham County marriage license screening procedure for teenagers.

Finally, most research to date on pregnancy provoked teenage marriages is descriptive in nature. Two further steps are needed. First theoretical formulation is needed to translate present findings into a meaningful framework. Second, significant hypotheses based upon this formulation need to be tested with diverse samples. Only

then will a body of scientific knowledge exist to substantiate or critique those programs that exist and are constantly being created to provide services for those persons who are, or may potentially be, involved in a pregnancy provoked teenage marriage.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MARRIAGE READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

MARRIAGE READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions to persons filling out this questionnaire

1. Fill out both sides of all pages
2. Answer all questions that apply to you
3. Do not leave a blank to mean "no"
4. If a question asks you to estimate a cost in dollars, give an exact figure, for example: \$120

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Date _____

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8. How happy was your parents' marriage while you were growing up?
 - a. very happy
 - b. happy
 - c. about average
 - d. unhappy
 - e. very unhappy

9. Are your biological parents living together?
 - a. yes - - if yes, go straight to question 13
 - b. no - - if no, answer all questions that follow
 - c. no - - I was adopted at age _____
 If you answer "c" also answer questions 10 through 13 as they apply to your adoptive parents

10. Check, and fill out information that applies to your situation:
 - a. parents were divorced in _____ (year)
 - b. father died in _____ (year)
 - c. mother died in _____ (year)
 - d. parents separated in _____ (year)
 - e. father remarried in _____ (year)
 - f. mother remarried in _____ (year)
 - g. father did not remarry
 - h. mother did not remarry
 - j. father has been married (including current marriage) a total of _____ times
 - k. mother has been married (including current marriage) a total of _____ times
 - l. father was married _____ times before he married my mother
 - m. mother was married _____ times before she married my father

11. Since the death, divorce or separation occurred, who have you been living with? _____

12. How would you rate the relationship between you and your step-parent?
 - a. very happy
 - b. happy
 - c. about average
 - d. unhappy
 - e. very unhappy
 - f. I have not been living with a step-parent

13. What was your father's occupation at the time you graduated from high school, or when you were age 18 (if you are under 18, list your father's present occupation)
-
14. Have you been previously married?
- a. yes - - if yes, list marriage date, date marriage ended (death of spouse, divorce, etc.), number of children, where they live, etc. in space after question 26
15. How long have you known your fiance? _____
16. How long have you been engaged? _____
17. When do you plan to get married? _____
18. How confident are you that your marriage will be a happy one?
- a. very confident
b. confident
c. a little uncertain
d. very uncertain
19. What is the attitude of your closest friend or friends about your choice of a marriage partner?
- a. approve highly of my choice
b. approve with qualifications
c. disapprove mildly
d. disapprove strongly
e. are resigned to my choice of marriage partner
20. Do your parents approve of your forthcoming marriage?
- a. both parents approve
b. mother approves, father does not approve
c. father approves, mother does not approve
d. both my parents do not approve
- 20a. Please explain your parent's reason for approving or disapproving of your plans for marriage.

21. Have you had any form of marriage preparation or instruction?
- a. no
 - b. yes - - if yes, check all that apply
 - c. discussions with clergyman
 - d. attended church-sponsored groups for marriage preparation
 - e. university or high school marriage or family life class
 - f. discussions with counselor
 - g. other _____
22. After you get married, do you plan to attend church services?
- a. I will attend _____ (name of church)
 - b. I have not decided
 - c. I probably will not attend any church services
23. What is your present occupation? _____
24. Please estimate YOUR PERSONAL, GROSS (before taxes) INCOME for your first year of marriage \$ _____
25. Do you have any medical (hospitalization) and/or life insurance?
- a. no
 - b. yes - - if yes, please give details
26. If you would like to add any other information, please write it in here on the remainder of this page.

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP INSTRUMENT

Name _____ Phone number _____ Date _____

Coding

Sex: 1=M
2=F

1. Case number _____

Card no.:
2 (M), 5 (F)

2. Date of birth _____

(Use Decimals for
months)

3. Date of marriage _____

___ Not married (99.99)

4. Birthdates of children _____

Date of
oldest
child
Number of
children

5. How many years of school have you
completed? _____
(12=high school graduate; 13=one year
of college or technical training,
etc.)

6. Are you now in school or in a
training program? Yes (1) No (2)
No response/Don't know (0)

(If yes) What kind? _____

Coding

7. Are you presently employed?
 Yes (1) No (2) NR/DK (0)
- (a) (If yes) At what type of job
 and for what firm? _____

- (b) (If no) Have you worked since
 your marriage? No = 00
- (If yes) What type of job and
 for what firm? _____

8. Which of the following best
 describes the location of your
 home for the major part of your
 life (prior to marriage)?
- _____ Farm, ranch or other open
 country (1)
- _____ Small town (less than
 2,500) (2)
- _____ Town or small city
 (2,500 to 50,000) (3)
- _____ Suburbs of a city of over
 50,000 (4)
- _____ City of over 50,000 (5)
9. What is the present status of
 your marriage?
- _____ Intact (1)
- _____ Separated less than one
 month (2)
- _____ Separated one month or more (3)
- _____ Divorced (4)
- _____ Did not marry (skip to #14) (5)
10. Which of the following best
 describes the attitude of your
 mother to the marriage at the
 time you were married?
- | | <u>10</u> | <u>11</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>13</u> | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Highly favorable | — | — | — | — | (5) |
| Moderately favorable | — | — | — | — | (4) |

See Guide

Coding

- | | <u>10</u> | <u>11</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>13</u> | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Neutral | — | — | — | — | (3) |
| Doubtful | — | — | — | — | (2) |
| Unfavorable | — | — | — | — | (1) |
| Other
(explain below) | — | — | — | — | (0) |
| (Explanation #10) _____ | | | | | |
| 11. Which of the following best describes the attitude of your father to the marriage at the time you were married? (Use scale for #10) | | | | | |
| (Explanation #11) _____ | | | | | |
| 12. (Only if #9 was 1 or 2) | | | | | |
| Which of the following best describes the attitude of your mother to the marriage now? (Use scale for #10) | | | | | |
| (Explanation #12) _____ | | | | | |
| 13. (Only if #9 was 1 or 2) | | | | | |
| Which of the following best describes the attitude of your father to the marriage now? (Use scale for #10) | | | | | |
| (Explanation #13) _____ | | | | | |
| 14. How many years of school has your mother completed? _____ | | | | | |
| (DK/other = 0) | | | | | |
| 15. How many years of school has your father completed? _____ | | | | | |
| (DK/other = 0) | | | | | |

		Coding
16.	What is your mother's age (or date of birth)? _____	DK=0, Age _____
17.	What is your father's age (or date of birth)? _____ (FINISHED IF NOT MARRIED)	DK=0, Age _____
18.	(a) Was your mother employed when you got married? Yes (1) No (2) DK (0)	_____
	(b) (If yes) At what type of work and for what firm? _____ _____	See Guide _____
	(c) (If no) Did she ever work outside the home? No = 00 (If yes) At what type of work and for what firm? _____ _____	
19.	(a) Was your father employed when you got married? Yes (1) No (2) DK (0)	_____
	(b) (If yes) At what type of work and for what firm? _____ _____	See Guide _____
	(c) (If no) What is his usual occupation? _____ _____	

(IF STILL MARRIED OR SEPARATED LESS THAN ONE MONTH)

20. (a) Your marriage seems to be succeeding though many young marriages do not. Do you have any ideas about why or how that might be helpful to others?

Have you received counseling since going through Probate Court? Yes No

(IF SEPARATED OR DIVORCED)

20. (b) Did you have any indication that the marriage was not going to go well?

When did you first think things were going badly?

What finished it off?

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTIVE AND STATISTICAL TABLES

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTIVE AND STATISTICAL TABLES

Table C-1.--Age at Marriage.

Age	Frequency		Youngest at Marriage
	Males	Females	
15		9 (22%)	9 (22%)
16	4 (10%)	12 (30%)	14 (35%)
17	18 (45%)	8 (20%)	10 (25%)
18	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	7 (18%)
19	6 (15%)	2 (5%)	
20	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	
21	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	
22	1 (2%)		
23	1 (2%)		

Table C-2.--Number of Siblings.

Number of Siblings	Frequency	
	Males	Females
1	5 (13%)	2 (5%)
2	9 (22%)	8 (20%)
3	7 (18%)	7 (18%)
4	6 (15%)	7 (18%)
5	4 (10%)	4 (10%)
6	2 (5%)	4 (10%)
7	2 (5%)	3 (7%)
8	3 (7%)	2 (5%)
9	1 (2%)	3 (7%)
15	1 (2%)	

Table 3.--Primary Place of Residence During Most of the Childhood Years.

Locale	Males	Females	Total
<u>Rural</u>	7 (18%)	7 (18%)	14 (18%)
Farm, Ranch or Open Country	3 (8%)	2 (5%)	5 (7%)
Small Town (less than 2,500 population)	4 (11%)	5 (13%)	9 (11%)
<u>Urban</u>	30 (81%)	32 (82%)	62 (82%)
Large Town or Small City (2,500 to 50,000 pop.)	5 (14%)	7 (18%)	12 (16%)
Suburbs of a City of Over 50,000	7 (19%)	4 (10%)	11 (14%)
City of Over 50,000	18 (49%)	21 (54%)	39 (52%)
Missing Cases	3	1	4

Table C-4.--Marital Status by Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage Using Collapsed Attitude Scales.

Marital Status	Parents of Both		Parents of the Male		Parents of the Female			
	Parental Attitude		Parental Attitude		Parental Attitude			
	High*	Low*	High*	Low*	High*	Low*		
Intact	25	9	Intact	25	8	Intact	23	11
Dissolved	4	2	Dissolved	3	0	Dissolved	3	2
Chi Square = .12			Chi Square = .941			Chi Square = .113		
C = .05		p > .70	C = .16		p > .30	C = .05		p > .70
df = 1		N = 40	df = 1		N = 36	df = 1		N = 39

*High parental attitude includes the categories highly favorable, favorable, and neutral. Low parental attitude includes the categories doubtful and unfavorable.

Table C-5.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Primary Place of Residence During Childhood With Collapsed Attitude Scales.

		Males		Locale	Females	
		Rural	Urban		Rural	Urban
Parental Attitude	Low*	1	7	Low*	3	10
	High*	6	21	High*	4	22
	Chi Square = .365			Chi Square = .352		
	C = .10	P > .50		C = .09	P > .50	
	df = 1	N = 35		df = 1	N = 39	

*High parental attitude includes the highly favorable, favorable, and neutral categories. Low parental attitude includes the doubtful and unfavorable categories.

Table C-6.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Father's Socio-Economic Index--Collapsed Scales.

		Males Father's Socio-Economic Index		Females Socio-Economic Index	
		Low ^a	High ^a	Low ^a	High ^a
Parental Attitude	Low ^b	4	4	8	5
	High ^b	21	6	17	9
		Chi Square = 2.32		Chi Square = .055	
		C = .24	P > .10	C = .04	P > .80
		df = 1	N = 35	df = 1	N = 39

^aLow socio-economic index includes the two low quartiles; high socio-economic index includes the two high quartiles.

^bLow attitude includes the unfavorable and doubtful categories; high attitude includes the neutral, favorable and highly favorable categories.

Table C-7.--Parental Attitude, in Retrospect, Toward the Marriage by the Father's Educational Level--Collapsed Scales.

		Males Father's Educational Level		Females	
		Low ^a	High ^a	Low ^a	High ^a
Parental Attitude	Low ^b	4	4	11	2
	High ^b	24	4	20	6
		Chi Square = 4.579		Chi Square = .317	
		C = .34	P < .05	C = .01	P > .50
		df = 1	N = 36	df = 1	N = 36

^aFor father's educational level, low indicates 12 years or less; high indicates more than 12 years.

^bLow attitude includes the unfavorable and doubtful categories; high attitude includes the neutral, favorable and highly favorable categories.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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