

MARITAL PREPAREDNESS OF BLACK AND  
WHITE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:  
A COMPARISON

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

Most of the research concerning marital preparedness concerns college students. There is little research concerning marital preparedness of high school youth and limited research concerning black high school youth. There is a definite need for more research concerning marital preparedness of youth since evidence indicates that the divorce rate is highest among those who marry while in their teens (Blood, 1969).

Even though blacks make up 11 percent of the total United States population (Reiss, 1971), there is little research on black families and no information is available concerning marriage preparation of black youth (Billingsley, 1968). The 1960 census reveals that men of age 50 who are black, only 56 percent are living with their first wife; whereas at this age, 79 percent of white males are living with their first wife (Udry, 1966). The 1967 census reveals that for all men under 70 who had ever married, 15 percent were known to be divorced. The proportion of white men who were known to be divorced was 14 percent and that for black men, 28 percent. The 1967 census also reveals that for all women under 70 who had ever married, 17 percent were known to be divorced. The proportion of white women who were known to be divorced was 15 percent and for black women, 31 percent (U. S. Census, 1967). In 1971,

census figures indicated that 11.8 percent white women and 15.8 percent black had first marriages that had ended in divorce. In 1950, the figures were 3.5 percent and 5.7 percent respectively (U. S. Census, 1971).

Since 1960, there has been a rise in the ratio of currently divorced persons to those who are partners in intact marriages. In 1960, there were 28 currently divorced men for every 1,000 men with wife present; by 1971 this ratio was 38 per 1,000. There were 42 currently divorced women for every 1,000 women with husband present in 1960 compared with 66 per 1,000 in 1972 (U. S. Census, 1972).

It is apparent from the increasing divorce rate that much more preparation for marriage is needed in our educational system. Success in marriage is to a large extent determined by how prepared an individual is to fulfill basic emotional needs in a future marriage partner (Stinnett, 1969). Currently there is very limited research and little education concerning high school students level of preparedness to fulfill such needs.

Research is even more limited concerning a comparison of black and white youth with respect to marriage preparation. Are white youth more or less prepared than black youth to fulfill in a future marriage partner such needs as the needs for communication, respect, personality fulfillment, and love? It would be beneficial to family life educators to know if differences did exist between black and white youth concerning their preparedness to fulfill such needs. Since no research is available on this topic, this study was designed to examine what differences do exist in the marital preparation of black and white youth.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning their marital preparedness. A secondary purpose was to compare the perceptions of blacks and whites concerning the major source of influence upon the formation of their attitudes toward marriage and the most important factor in achieving marital success. Specifically, the following hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the total Readiness for Marital Competence (RMC) Index scores.
2. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning love.
3. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning personality fulfillment.
4. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning respect.
5. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-score concerning communication.
6. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the major source of influence upon the formation of their attitudes toward marriage.

7. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the most important factor in achieving marital success.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature here is composed primarily of research findings which pertain particularly to blacks and black-white comparisons concerning dating, premarital sexual standards, marital instability, parental roles and a summary of the research done concerning marital adjustments. Literature comparing the marital preparedness of primarily white high school students is also reviewed.

#### Dating

The literature on dating patterns of blacks reveals that little is known. It has been suggested that dating behavior of blacks is more of an unstructured process than among whites in that there are less rigid role expectations in dating behavior (Staples, 1971). Dating begins earlier for black females. Among blacks, going steady is the most prevalent mode of dating and the least common is double dating. Black females tend to favor marriage to a greater extent than black males (Anderson and Himes, 1959; Broderick, 1965).

There are almost a million more black women in the United States than black men (U. S. Department of Labor, 1969). The shortage of black men suggests to many black women that they have to take love on male terms and some black men are strongly tempted to trade love for a living (Bernard, 1966). This situation may often contribute to sexual

exploitation in dating relationships (Staples, 1971).

### Premarital Sex

Reiss (1964), in a study of premarital sexual standards, found that blacks have a more permissive premarital sex code than whites. For example, Reiss found the following proportions of blacks and whites accepting premarital coitus: white males, 20 percent; black males, 65 percent; white females, 6 percent; black females, 30 percent.

Black females have higher rates of premarital coitus and premarital pregnancy than do whites. These rates are significantly affected by social class membership in that there is higher proportions of blacks in the lower and lower-lower social groups. Premarital coitus and premarital pregnancy rates are highest among the lower social economic classes in America (Gebhard, 1958; Reiss, 1967).

The family is usually the primary mediator of cultural values. However, there seems to be a greater amount of peer group socialization among blacks than whites (Hammond and Ladner, 1969).

The illegitimacy ratio for blacks is almost one illegitimate birth for every four legitimate births, and this is about eight times as high as the white illegitimacy rate. When the income differential is considered, the illegitimacy rates are still higher for blacks (Rainwater and Yancey, 1967).

As a group, blacks do not use birth control as regularly as whites and have a higher level of birth rates (Kiser, 1962). To many black females, motherhood signifies maturity and the fulfillment of one's function as a woman (Johnson, 1934; Bernard, 1966). If any conclusions can be drawn about black sexual behavior as compared to white sexual

behavior, it is that they are converging into a single standard. This standard might best be termed permissiveness with affection (Pope and Knudsen, 1965).

Sorensen (1973) reported that between ages 13-15, 37 percent are nonvirgins while between ages 16-19, 64 percent were nonvirgins. He states that there is a growing trend among teenagers to have sex with only one person at a time (monogamist). The teens have a growing belief that what they are doing is an ethical and convenient means of enjoying sex without the commitment of marriage (p. 196).

#### Marital Instability

A distinct trait of black families is their high divorce and separation rates and relatedly, the high proportion of black families which lack a male head. While only 19 percent of white children live in broken homes, one third of black children do (Moynihan, 1965).

The major factor attributed to the high rate of marital instability among black families is the husband's or wife's employment status. Aldous (1969) reports that when the wife is employed outside the home and shares the provider function, the husband may become unsure of his status in the family and withdraw from family tasks and decisions. Parker and Kleiner (1969) discovered that deviance in the black male family role performance was related to generalized feelings of failure and hopelessness among black males. These same males who perceived themselves as low achievers with little hope of success are more inclined to believe that they are failing in their family performance. Another contributing factor to black marital instability is the lack of a close unit kin network in lower-class black communities. This often

deprives married couples of such resources as intimate relationships, persons who will provide help in time of need or persons who have any commitment to whether or not the husband and wife stay together (Rainwater and Swartz, 1965; Feagin, 1969).

#### Parental Roles

In a study of lower-income black mothers in Philadelphia, Bell (1967) asked his subjects: "If you could only be a wife or mother (but not both) which would you choose?", 15 percent of the one-parent and 13 percent of the paired parent mothers answered "don't know." Of the one-parent group, 73 percent said "mother" and 12 percent "wife." Of the one-parent mothers, 26 percent said that if they could start over again, they would not have children; 14 percent of the paired parent mothers felt this way. For half the mothers of both sets, the ideal number of children was three or fewer, Bell concluded that given their social class level and its related problems--some lower-class black women actually reject the adult female roles of both spouse and mother.

Blood and Wolfe (1966) reported evidence in their Detroit study showing that among whites, 20 percent of the 544 families were classified as wife dominant, whereas among blacks, 44 percent of the 103 black families were classified as wife dominant. Blood and Wolfe reported that at the same social-status level, the white husbands are more powerful in their marriages than are black husbands. One of the basic reasons for this female dominance is the default of the male (Rainwater, 1966; Rodman, 1968). It is not that the female wants or prefers to be dominant, but that the black male's cultural heritage is an emasculating one. The high proportion of black males who do not perform as the

breadwinner for a family sets an example that tends to have a psychological influence upon male children concerning the male role. This situation is perpetuated by the fact that about one third of the husband-wife black families and two thirds of the female-headed black families are living in poverty. For whites, the comparable rates are 9 percent and 30 percent (Moynihan, 1965). Associated with the fact that many black males have difficulty in performing as a breadwinner is the fact that the review of literature indicates that many black males are not adequately carrying out the parental role function (Aldous, 1969; Blood and Wolfe, 1969).

Liebow (1966) studied a group of lower-class black males and found that they entered marriage with ideals as high as those of any other young man; they felt that they were making a lifetime commitment, and they were eager to make a go of it. It was only when the number of children and responsibilities increased that some of them withdrew. It is not necessarily that they rejected their families; it is more likely that the role of father, as institutionalized in our society, became too difficult and expensive for their resources. They still had high aspirations for their children, as the mothers did, but they could not implement them. So as the babies multiplied and the burden of support became heavier and heavier, it finally became easier just to leave. Liebow (1966) and Schultz (1969) found that the role of the father in many black families is highly dependent on the male's ability to earn a living and his willingness to share that living with his family.

Research indicates that the frequent employment of the mother creates special problems in the socialization of black children, especially if the findings that many black husbands-fathers do not help their wives

in the home is accepted as valid (Blood and Wolfe, 1969). According to several studies, many lower-class black children are trained to be of little bother to their parents and are expected to mature early (Davis and Dollard, 1940; Kardiner and Ovesey, 1951; Rainwater, 1966). These same children are liberated earlier for productive activity and children freed for work and economic independence are also liberated from parental control. Thus a great deal of socialization takes place within the peer group context rather than in the family environment (Ausubel and Ausubel, 1963).

The methods of child rearing cannot be attributed solely to the black mother's employment outside the home. In Blau's (1964) study of mothers interviewed during confinement in the hospital, she discovered that class for class, fewer black mothers than white mothers had been exposed to articles pertaining to child rearing. Generally, black grandmothers are very supportive in the rearing of children. It is assumed that they take on this importance because many men are absent from the household (Rainwater, 1966; Frazier, 1939).

Rainwater (1966) has reported that children often experience an over-emphasis upon their shortcomings and that parents often contribute to the formation of their children's negative self-concept by exposing them to identity labeling as a "bad" person. Often, as the child develops into adulthood, his subsequent lack of gratification in life only serves to confirm his self-image as an essentially unworthy person (Rainwater, 1966).

The findings of Talley's study (1971) indicated that black high school students experience closer parent-child relationships and appeared to be more mother-centered than the white students. Further

findings of Talley were:

1. A larger proportion of white students than black students felt that the closeness of the relationship with their father during their childhood was below average.
2. Three times as many white students as black students reported that the closeness of the relationship with their mother during childhood was below average.
3. A greater proportion of the white students than the blacks reported their fathers as their source of most discipline during childhood.
4. Twice as many black students as white students reported they received praise very often during their childhood.
5. A greater proportion of the white students reported their father as their greatest source of affection during childhood.
6. Twice as many white students reported their father as their greatest parental influence in determining the kind of person they are.
7. Twice as many white students reported that they rarely felt free to talk with parents about problems and other concerns.

#### Marital Adjustment

Rutledge (1966, p. 1) stated, "The best preparation for married living is comprised of all those experiences which are so natural that they do not call special attention to themselves." Ideally, the home provides an atmosphere in which a person may gain a realistic understanding of marriage and an ability to find satisfaction through an intimate relationship with another person.

Marital adjustment may be thought of as a continuum, ranging from complete adjustment to complete maladjustment. It is the process of adaptation of the husband and the wife in such a way as to avoid or resolve conflicts sufficiently so that the mates feel satisfied with the marriage and with each other, develop common interests and activities, and feel that the marriage is fulfilling their expectations (Locke and Williamson, 1958).

Of the several criteria proposed for marital success and or adjustment, the four most generally used include: (a) permanence, (b) children, (c) satisfaction, and (d) adjustment (Burgess and Locke, 1953). Kephart (1961) has listed: (a) permanence, (b) children, (c) respect of community, (d) economic well-being, (e) sexual compatibility, (f) common interests, and (g) affectional relationship.

Kirkpatrick (1963) in a summary of marriage studies (primarily involving white marriages) lists the following factors in order of importance which have shown the strongest and most consistent association with marital adjustment: (a) marital happiness of parents, (b) length of acquaintance, (c) adequate sex information in childhood, (d) personal childhood happiness, (e) approval of marriage by parents and others, (f) engagement adjustment and normal motivation toward marriage, (g) ethnic and religious similarity, (h) high educational and social status, and (i) harmonious affection with parents during childhood.

#### Marital Preparedness

Using a sample of single undergraduate college students, Stinnett (1969) found that Readiness for Marital Competence Index scores were significantly and positively related to happiness of childhood, positive

relationship with the parents, democratic authority pattern in the family of orientation, engagement to be married, emotional stability, and the unemployment of the mother for a major portion of the respondent's life.

Sporakowski (1965) studied 678 single and 57 married students in an attempt to determine whether a relationship exists between selected background factors and marital preparedness, prediction, and adjustment. No significant relationships were found between prediction, adjustment, or preparation and maternal employment, sex of respondent, birth order, or the size of the family of orientation. Marital preparedness and adjustment were not related to religious affiliation, socio-economic status, or the authority pattern in the family. Marital prediction was significantly related to religious affiliation with the Mormon religion representing the highest score, socio-economic status with the students in the highest economic class receiving the highest score, and the authority pattern of the family of orientation with the respondents from "middle of the road" families receiving the highest score and those from authoritarian families scoring the least favorably. Marital preparedness was related to the marital status of the respondent. As dating involvement increased the preparedness score increased; however, after marriage the preparedness self-ratings dropped possibly indicating a "more realistic assessment of readiness for marriage once the individual has become involved in it" (p. 158),

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Selection of Subjects

The subjects for this study were selected from seven high schools throughout the state of Oklahoma. The subjects were in the 11th and 12th grades and enrolled in Home Economics classes. A total sample of 499 students was obtained.

From the total sample, 167 white students were randomly selected and matched with 167 black students in terms of socio-economic class in an effort to control for the socio-economic factor. It was not considered necessary to match the subjects according to sex since Pyles (1971), in a previous study utilizing the same 499 students from which the subjects for this study was selected, found that no significant difference existed in RMC Index scores according to sex.

#### Instrument

An information sheet was designed to obtain information concerning the: (a) demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, race, socio-economic class, parents' marital status, and (b) perceptions of respondent concerning parent-child relationships such as parent-child communication, closeness of relationship with each parent. The McGuire-White Index of Socio-Economic Status (short form) (1955), was used to

assess the status of the respondents, based on the criteria of the family head's occupation, source of income, and level of educational attainment. All questions on the information sheet were fixed alternative-type questions.

The RMC Index (Stinnett, 1969), a Lickert-type scale, was used to measure the degree to which the high school students in this study felt prepared to fulfill in a future mate the needs of love, personality fulfillment, respect, and communication. Stinnett (1969, p. 683) reported:

To the extent that an individual is successful in fulfilling these needs (love, personality fulfillment, respect, and communication) with respect to the mate, to that extent does the individual contribute to the welfare and development of the mate and therefore to the success of the marriage.

The Readiness for Marital Competence Index was developed by Stinnett (1969) for use with college students. As an index of the validity of the RMC Index an item analysis, utilizing the chi-square test, revealed that all the items were significantly discriminating between the upper and lower quartile groups at the .001 level. A split-half reliability coefficient of .99 was obtained. Each question has five degrees of response which range from very prepared to very unprepared to perform the task stated. The items are scored in such a manner that the most favorable responses (most prepared) are given the lowest score (1) while the least favorable responses (least prepared) are given the highest score (5).

Hall (1971) revised the RMC Index for use with high school students. This revised form was used in this study. As an index of the validity of the RMC Index when used with high school students, an item

analysis revealed that all the items were significantly discriminating at the .001 level. The revision of the instrument involved a condensation of the 46 items to 36 items.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Description of Subjects

From the total sample of 499 subjects, 167 white students were randomly selected and matched with 167 black students in terms of socio-economic status in an effort to control for socio-economic class. Therefore, all the statistical analyses used in this study are based upon these two groups of 167 white and 167 black students. The McGuire-White Index of Socio-Economic Status (short form) was used to assess the socio-economic status of each respondent, based on the criteria of the family head's occupation, source of income, and level of educational attainment.

Table I presents a description of the 167 black high school students who served as subjects in this study. The respondents were in the 11th or 12th grade, predominantly Protestant (86.71%), and the greatest proportion (47.40%) lived in a small town under 25,000 population for the major part of their lives. Table II presents a detailed description of the 167 white high school students who served as subjects in this study. The respondents were in the 11th or 12th grade, predominantly Protestant (76.30%), and the majority of the subjects lived in a small town under 25,000 population for the major part of their lives (46.82%). Females constituted approximately 79 percent of the black respondents.

TABLE I  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACK SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Sex	Male	35	20.23
	Female	138	79.77
Employment of mother for major part of childhood	No	58	33.53
	Yes (part-time)	63	36.42
	Yes (full-time)	51	29.48
Religious preference	Catholic	0	0.0
	Protestant	150	86.71
	Jewish	0	0.0
	Morman	0	0.0
	None	1	.58
	Other	21	12.14
Residence for major part of life	On farm or in country	43	24.86
	Small town under 25,000 population	82	47.40
	City of 25,000 to 50,000 population	26	15.03
	City of 50,000 to 100,000 population	13	7.51
	City over 100,000 population	6	3.41
Parents' marital status	Living together	86	49.71
	Separated or divorced (with no remarriage)	48	27.75
	One of parents de- ceased (with no re- marriage)	25	14.45
	Divorced (with re- marriage)	6	3.47
	One of parents deceased (with remarriage)	5	2.89
Socio-economic class	Upper-upper	0	0.0
	Upper-middle	10	5.78
	Lower-middle	35	20.23
	Upper-lower	86	49.71
	Lower-lower	42	24.28

TABLE II  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WHITE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Sex	Male	54	31.31
	Female	119	68.79
Employment of mother for major part of childhood	No	101	58.38
	Yes (part-time)	36	20.81
	Yes (full-time)	36	20.81
Religious preference	Catholic	4	2.31
	Protestant	132	76.30
	Jewish	0	0.0
	Morman	0	0.0
	None	12	6.94
	Other	23	13.29
Residence for major part of life	On farm or in country	40	23.12
	Small town under 25,000 population	81	46.82
	City of 25,000 to 50,000 population	36	20.81
	City of 50,000 to 100,000 population	10	5.78
	City over 100,000 population	4	2.31
Parents' marital status	Living together	124	71.63
	Separated or divorced (with no remarriage)	15	8.67
	One of parents de- ceased (with no re- marriage)	16	9.25
	Divorced (with re- marriage)	10	5.78
	One of parents deceased (with remarriage)	7	4.05
Socio-economic class	Upper-upper	0	0.0
	Upper-middle	10	5.78
	Lower-middle	35	20.23
	Upper-lower	86	49.71
	Lower-lower	42	24.28

The greatest proportion of both black and white respondents reported their parents' marital status as living together, although this response was given by a much greater proportion of white respondents (71.63%) than black respondents (27.75%).

### Examination of Major Hypotheses

Hypothesis I. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students total RMC Index scores.

There was no significant difference in the total RMC Index scores according to race. This finding is particularly interesting in view of the fact that the divorce rate is higher among blacks than whites and in view of the fact that there are more one-parent families among blacks, The present findings imply that there is not as much difference in the perceptions of black and white youth concerning marriage as is commonly thought.

TABLE III

F SCORE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES  
IN THE TOTAL RMC INDEX SCORES

Description	No.	$\bar{X}$	F	Level of Sig.
Black	167	64.91	2.02	N.S.
White	167	69.11		

Hypothesis II. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning love.

As Table IV indicates, there was no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning love.

TABLE IV.

F SCORE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES  
IN THE RMC INDEX SUB-SCORES CONCERNING LOVE

Description	No.	$\bar{X}$	F	Level of Sig.
Black	167	16.38	0.15	N.S.
White	167	16.06		

Hypothesis III. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-score concerning personality fulfillment.

Table V indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between blacks and whites in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning personality fulfillment. The black students received a significantly more favorable RMC Index sub-score in the area of personality fulfillment (as indicated by the lower mean sub-score) than did white students.

This finding indicates that black students felt significantly more

prepared to meet the need for personality fulfillment in a future mate than do the white students. This finding may be related to Talley's findings (1971) that black students expressed closer parent-child relationships than did white students. Perhaps the experiencing of closer parent-child relationships would enable the black students to become more responsive to the need for personality fulfillment in a future mate.

TABLE V

F SCORE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES IN THE  
RMC INDEX SUB-SCORES CONCERNING PERSONALITY FULFILLMENT

Description	No.	$\bar{X}$	F	Level of Sig.
Black	167	16.88	4.91	.05
White	167	18.69		

Hypothesis IV. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning respect.

As Table VI indicates, there was no significant difference between blacks and whites in RMC Index sub-scores concerning respect.

TABLE VI

F SCORE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES  
IN THE RMC INDEX SUB-SCORES CONCERNING RESPECT

Description	No.	$\bar{X}$	F	Level of Sig.
Black	167	16.22	1.21	N.S.
White	167	17.13		

Hypothesis V. There is no significant difference between black and white high school students in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning communication.

Table VII shows that a significant difference at the .05 level was found to exist between blacks and whites in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning communication, as Table VII illustrates blacks expressed a significantly more favorable sub-score than whites.

TABLE VII

F SCORE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES  
IN THE RMC INDEX SUB-SCORES CONCERNING COMMUNICATION

Description	No.	$\bar{X}$	F	Level of Sig.
Black	167	15.43	4.74	.05
White	167	17.22		

This finding supports Talley's (1971) research which indicated that a significantly larger percentage of black students (27.2%) than white students (15.9%) reported they very often felt free to talk with parents about problems and other concerns. Talley's findings also indicated that the black students had experienced significantly closer relationships with both mother and father during childhood and had also received significantly more praise during childhood. Perhaps the closer parent-child relationships and the more positive communication patterns which the black students experienced with their parents contributes to the black students' feeling more prepared to fulfill the need for communication in a future marriage partner.

Hypothesis VI. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the major source of influence upon the formation of their attitudes toward marriage.

As Table VIII indicates, there is no significant difference in perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the major source of influence upon the formation of attitudes toward marriage. This finding is interesting in view of the commonly held assumption that blacks are more greatly influenced by their peers concerning their attitudes toward such topics as marriage.

Hypothesis VII. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the most important factor in achieving marital success.

As Table IX indicates, no significant difference existed in the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning the most

important factor in achieving marital success.

TABLE VIII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS  
CONCERNING THE MAJOR SOURCE OF INFLUENCE UPON  
FORMATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE

Perceptions	<u>Black</u>		<u>White</u>		$X^2$	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Parents	89	57	86	54	6.98	N.S.
Peers	34	22	47	29		
School	6	4	8	5		
Church	12	8	13	8		
Mass Media (books, magazines, movies, etc.)	16	10	6	4		

TABLE IX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS  
CONCERNING THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN  
ACHIEVING MARITAL SUCCESS

Perceptions	<u>Black</u>		<u>White</u>		$\chi^2$	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Being in love	53	33	47	30		
Determination to make the marriage succeed	53	33	44	28		
Having common interests	10	6	10	6	3.96	N.S.
Compatibility of personalities	12	7	9	6		
Mutual respect and consideration	34	21	48	30		

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The general purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of black and white high school students concerning their marital preparedness. A secondary purpose was to compare the perceptions of blacks and whites concerning the major source of influence upon the formation of their attitudes toward marriage and the most important factor in achieving marital success.

The sample was composed of 167 black and 167 white high school students of comparable socio-economic status selected randomly from a sample of 499 Oklahoma high school students. The subjects were single, primarily Protestant, and in the 11th and 12th grade. The data were obtained during February of 1971.

The questionnaire used in this study was developed to investigate high school students' perceptions of their preparedness for marriage. The questionnaire included the following: (a) an information sheet for securing background data, and (b) Stinnett's Readiness for Marital Competence Index (revised) designed to determine the degree to which the students feel prepared to fulfill basic emotional needs in a future spouse.

Data were analyzed by the analysis of variance to determine if a significant difference existed between black and white high school students concerning the following: (a) total RMC Index scores and (b) RMC

Index sub-scores concerning love, personality fulfillment, respect, and communication. The chi-square test was used to examine the difference in the perceptions of blacks and whites concerning: (a) the major source of influence toward forming attitudes toward marriage and (b) the most important factor in achieving marital success. The results of the study were as follows:

1. No significant differences were found to exist in the total RMC Index scores of black and white high school students.
2. No significant differences were found in the RMC Index sub-scores concerning (a) love, and (b) respect,
3. A significant difference of the .05 level was found to exist in the RMC Index sub-score concerning personality fulfillment. The black students expressed a significantly greater degree of preparedness than the white students to meet the need for personality fulfillment in a future mate,
4. A significant difference at the .05 level was found to exist in the RMC Index sub-score concerning communication. The black students expressed a significantly greater degree of preparedness to fulfill the need of communication in a future marriage partner,
5. No significant differences were found in the perceptions concerning the major source of influence upon the attitudes toward marriage according to race.
6. No significant differences were found in the perceptions concerning the most important factor in achieving marital success according to race.

The findings of this study suggest that there is not as many

differences in the perceptions of black and white youth concerning marriage as is commonly thought. Black students expressed a significantly greater degree of preparedness to meet the need for personality fulfillment as well as the need for communication. This can be related to Talley's (1971) research which indicated that the black students experienced closer parent-child relationships than did white students.

The findings of this study contradict the commonly held assumption that blacks are influenced more than are whites by peers in their formation of attitudes toward marriage. This research showed that a greater proportion of white students (29%) than black students (22%) indicated that the major source of influence on attitudes toward marriage was peers. Parents were listed as the major source of influence by 57 percent of the black students as compared to 54 percent of the white students.

The results of this study raise an interesting question concerning why the black students feel more prepared to meet the needs of personality fulfillment and communication in a future mate than do white students. This question merits examination in future research. It is recommended that such research as well as a replication of the present study be conducted on a national level including a representation of all socio-economic groups,

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## APPENDIXES

Your cooperation in this project is greatly appreciated. Your contribution in a research project of this type helps us to gain greater knowledge and insight into human relationships. Please check or fill in answers as appropriate to each question. Since your name is not required, please be as honest in your answers as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a test.

The blanks at the extreme left of the page are for purposes of coding. (Do not fill in.)

\_\_\_\_ 1. - 3.

\_\_\_\_ 4. Sex:            \_\_\_\_ 1. male  
                             \_\_\_\_ 2. female

\_\_\_\_ 5. Age:            \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ 6. Race:           \_\_\_\_ 1. White  
                             \_\_\_\_ 2. Black  
                             \_\_\_\_ 3. Indian  
                             \_\_\_\_ 4. Other

\_\_\_\_ 7. Was your mother employed for the major part of your childhood?

\_\_\_\_ 1. No  
\_\_\_\_ 2. Yes (part-time employment)  
\_\_\_\_ 3. Yes (full-time employment)

\_\_\_\_ 8. If your mother was employed for the major part of your childhood, did she enjoy her work?

\_\_\_\_ 1. Yes  
\_\_\_\_ 2. Undecided  
\_\_\_\_ 3. No

\_\_\_\_ 9. Religious preference;

____ 1. Catholic	____ 4. Mormon
____ 2. Protestant	____ 5. None
____ 3. Jewish	____ 6. Other

\_\_\_\_\_  
Specify

\_\_\_10. For the major part of your life have you lived;

- \_\_\_1. On farm or in country
- \_\_\_2. Small town under 25,000 population
- \_\_\_3. City of 25,000 to 50,000 population
- \_\_\_4. City of 50,000 to 100,000 population
- \_\_\_5. City of over 100,000 population

\_\_\_11. What is your parents' marital status?

- \_\_\_1. Living together
- \_\_\_2. Separated or divorced (with no remarriage)
- \_\_\_3. One of parents deceased (with no remarriage)
- \_\_\_4. Divorced (with remarriage)
- \_\_\_5. One of parents deceased (with remarriage)

\_\_\_12. What is the occupation of the head of your family (teacher, policeman, etc.)?

---

\_\_\_13. What is the primary source of the income of your family?

- \_\_\_1. Inherited savings and investments
- \_\_\_2. Earned wealth, transferable investment
- \_\_\_3. Profits, royalties, fees
- \_\_\_4. Salary, Commissions (regular, monthly, or yearly)
- \_\_\_5. Hourly wages, weekly checks
- \_\_\_6. Odd jobs, seasonal work, private charity
- \_\_\_7. Public relief or charity

\_\_\_14. What is the highest educational attainment of the principal earner of the income of your family?

- \_\_\_1. Completed graduate work for a profession
- \_\_\_2. Graduated from a 4-year college

- ☐ 3. Attended college or university for two or more years
  - ☐ 4. Graduated from high school
  - ☐ 5. Attended high school, completed grade 9, but did not graduate
  - ☐ 6. Completed grade 8, but did not attend beyond grade 9
  - ☐ 7. Less than grade 8
- ☐ 15. (Omit)
- ☐ 16. Which one of the following most nearly describes the type of discipline you received as a child from your father?
- ☐ 1. Very permissive
  - ☐ 2. Permissive
  - ☐ 3. Moderate degree of both permissiveness and strictness
  - ☐ 4. Strict
  - ☐ 5. Very strict
- ☐ 17. Which one of the following most nearly describes the type of discipline you received as a child from your mother?
- ☐ 1. Very permissive
  - ☐ 2. Permissive
  - ☐ 3. Moderate degree of both permissiveness and strictness
  - ☐ 4. Strict
  - ☐ 5. Very strict
- ☐ 18. Which one of the following describes the degree of closeness of your relationship with your father during childhood?
- ☐ 1. Above average
  - ☐ 2. Average
  - ☐ 3. Below average

- \_\_\_19. Which one of the following describes the degree of closeness of your relationship with your mother during childhood?
- \_\_\_1. Above average  
\_\_\_2. Average  
\_\_\_3. Below average
- \_\_\_20. As a child who did you receive most of your discipline from?
- \_\_\_1. Usually my mother  
\_\_\_2. Usually my father  
\_\_\_3. Both mother and father about equally
- \_\_\_21. How much were you praised as a child?
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate
- \_\_\_22. From whom did you receive the most affection as a child?
- \_\_\_1. Mother  
\_\_\_2. Father  
\_\_\_3. Both mother and father about equally  
\_\_\_4. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
(Specify)
- \_\_\_23. As a child did your family participate in recreation together?
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate
- \_\_\_24. As a child did your father find time to do things together with you?
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_25. As a child did your mother find time to do things together with you?

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_26. As a child did your parents encourage you to respect the feelings of other children?

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

As a child, how much were each of the following disciplinary methods used with you by your parents?

\_\_\_27. Physical punishment

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_28. Deprivation of privileges

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_29. Being isolated (forced to stay in room, etc.)

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_30. Withdrawal of love

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_31. Use of reasoning

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_32. Use of tangible rewards

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Moderate    |                  |

\_\_\_33. Do you feel that you can talk with your parents freely about your problems and things that concern you?

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ___1. Very rarely | ___4. Often      |
| ___2. Rarely      | ___5. Very often |
| ___3. Average     |                  |

\_\_\_34. Which parent do you feel has had the greatest influence in determining the kind of person you are?

- |  |
|--|
| ___1. Mother                               |
| ___2. Father                               |
| ___3. Both mother and father about equally |

\_\_\_35. Which one of the following do you feel has had the greatest influence in determining the kind of person you are?

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ___1. One or both parents   | ___4. A public figure such as a president or movie star |
| ___2. A brother or sister   |   |
| ___3. Friends of my own age | ___5. Other   |

---

(Specify)

How much emphasis did your parents place on your learning each of the following values?

\_\_\_36. Determination and Perverserance

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_37. Seeing each person as having dignity and worth

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_38. Cooperation

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_39. Self discipline

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_40. Spiritual development

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_41. Loyalty

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

\_\_\_\_42. Feeling genuine concern and responsibility toward others

- \_\_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_\_3. Moderate

- \_\_\_43. Expressing sincere appreciation for others
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate
- \_\_\_44. Taking responsibility for the consequences of your own actions
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate
- \_\_\_45. Did your parents express affection toward you openly as a child?
- \_\_\_1. Very rarely      \_\_\_4. Often  
\_\_\_2. Rarely      \_\_\_5. Very often  
\_\_\_3. Moderate
- \_\_\_46. Which one of the following do you feel has influenced you most in the formation of your attitudes toward marriage?
- \_\_\_1. Parents      \_\_\_4. Church  
\_\_\_2. Friends my own age      \_\_\_5. Mass media (books, magazines, movies, etc.)  
\_\_\_3. School
- \_\_\_47. How prepared do you feel for marriage at the present time?
- \_\_\_1. Very prepared      \_\_\_4. Unprepared  
\_\_\_2. Prepared      \_\_\_5. Very unprepared  
\_\_\_3. Uncertain
- \_\_\_48. Which of the following do you believe to be most important in achieving marital success (select one)?
- \_\_\_1. Being in love  
\_\_\_2. Determination to make the marriage succeed  
\_\_\_3. Having common interests

\_\_\_\_4. Compatibility of personalities

\_\_\_\_5. Mutual respect and consideration

\_\_\_\_49. What is your present dating situation?

\_\_\_\_1. Seldom date

\_\_\_\_4. Going steady

\_\_\_\_2. Moderately

\_\_\_\_5. Engaged

\_\_\_\_3. Date often

## PREPAREDNESS SCALE

(Male Form)

Directions: This instrument is an attempt to determine how well prepared individuals feel they are in performing their future marriage roles. We are not concerned with how well prepared you think you "ought" to be, but with how prepared you feel you actually are. Please be as frank as possible in your answers. Remember, your name is not required on this questionnaire.

For each item below you are to indicate the degree to which you feel you are prepared or unprepared by circling the number in the appropriate box at the left of each item.

Response code: Very Prepared = VP (circle 1); Moderately Prepared = MP (circle 2); Undecided = UD (circle 3); Moderately Unprepared = MUP (circle 4); Very Unprepared = VUP (circle 5).

	VP	MP	UD	MUP	VUP	Concerning my marriage relationship with my future wife, I feel I am prepared in the following:
___ 1,	1	2	3	4	5	Promoting a feeling of security in her,
___ 2.	1	2	3	4	5	Expressing my affection for her.
___ 3	1	2	3	4	5	Showing my admiration for her.
___ 4,	1	2	3	4	5	Satisfying her desire for affection.
___ 5.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing her that I evaluate her highly.
___ 6.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to feel that she is an attractive person.
___ 7.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing my confidence in her.
___ 8.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting her know that I feel emotionally close to her,
___ 9.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting her know that I believe we have a common purpose in life,
___ 10.-11.	(omit)					

	VP	MP	UD	MUP	VUP	
___12.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to achieve her potentials (to become what she is capable of becoming).
___13.	1	2	3	4	5	Bringing out the "best" qualities in her.
___14.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to become a more interesting person.
___15.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to see herself more positively.
___16.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to increase her circle of friends.
___17.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to improve the quality of her interpersonal relationships outside marriage.
___18.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to improve her personality.
___19.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to act according to her own beliefs rather than simply "following the crowd."
___20.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to have confidence in herself.
___21, -22.	(omit)					
___23.	1	2	3	4	5	Being a good listener when she talks to me.
___24.	1	2	3	4	5	Encouraging her when she is discouraged.
___25.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeing things from her point of view.
___26.	1	2	3	4	5	Being considerate of her feelings.
___27.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing her that I understand what she wants to achieve in life.

	VP	MP	UD	MUP	VUP	
___28.	1	2	3	4	5	Respecting her wishes when making important decisions.
___29.	1	2	3	4	5	Accepting disagreement from her.
___30.	1	2	3	4	5	Accepting her differentness.
___31.	1	2	3	4	5	Avoiding habits which annoy her.
___32,-33.	(omit)					
___34.	1	2	3	4	5	Expressing my disagreement with her honestly and openly.
___35.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting her know how I really feel about something.
___36.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping her to express her feelings to me.
___37.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting her know about my expectations in life.
___38.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeing beyond what she says and being aware of her true feelings when her feelings are different from her words.
___39.	1	2	3	4	5	Being aware that what she says may not always indicate how she really feels about something.
___40.	1	2	3	4	5	When she is angry at me trying to understand why she is angry.
___41.	1	2	3	4	5	Being observant as to whether she has understood correctly the meaning of the message I have communicated to her.
___42.	1	2	3	4	5	When I am troubled, letting her know what is bothering me.
___43,-44.	(omit)					

## PREPAREDNESS SCALE

(Female Form)

Directions: This instrument is an attempt to determine how well prepared individuals feel they are in performing their future marriage roles. We are not concerned with how well prepared you think you "ought" to be, but how prepared you feel you actually are. Please be as frank as possible in your answers. Remember, your name is not required on this questionnaire.

For each item below you are to indicate the degree to which you feel you are prepared or unprepared by circling the number in the appropriate box at the left of each item.

Response code; Very Prepared = VP (circle 1); Moderately Prepared = MP (circle 2); Undecided = UD (circle 3); Moderately Unprepared = MUP (circle 4); Very Unprepared = VUP (circle 5).

	VP	MP	UD	MUP	VUP	Concerning my marriage relationship with my future husband, I feel I am prepared in the following:
___ 1.	1	2	3	4	5	Promoting a feeling of security in him.
___ 2.	1	2	3	4	5	Expressing my affection for him.
___ 3.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing my admiration for him.
___ 4.	1	2	3	4	5	Satisfying his desire for affection.
___ 5.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing him that I evaluate him highly.
___ 6.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to feel that he is an attractive person.
___ 7.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing my confidence in him.
___ 8.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting him know that I feel emotionally close to him.
___ 9.	1	2	3	4	5	Letting him know that I believe we have a common purpose in life.
___ 10.-11.						(omit)

	VP	MP	UD	MUD	VUP	
___12.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to achieve his potential (to become what he is capable of becoming).
___13.	1	2	3	4	5	Bringing out the "best" qualities in him,
___14.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to become a more interesting person.
___15.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to see himself more positively.
___16.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to increase his circle of friends,
___17.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to improve the quality of his interpersonal relationships outside marriage,
___18.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to improve his personality.
___19.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to act according to his own beliefs rather than simply "following the crowd."
___20.	1	2	3	4	5	Helping him to have confidence in himself.
___21,-22.	(omit)					
___23.	1	2	3	4	5	Being a good listener when he talks to me.
___24.	1	2	3	4	5	Encouraging him when he is discouraged.
___25.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeing things from his point of view.
___26.	1	2	3	4	5	Being considerate of his feelings.
___27.	1	2	3	4	5	Showing him that I understand what he wants to achieve in life,



VITA

Virginia K. Allen Stanley

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: MARITAL PREPAREDNESS OF BLACK AND WHITE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:  
A COMPARISON

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Poteau, Oklahoma, February 27, 1942, the daughter of Mrs. Ruby Allen and the late Mr. Leo Allen.

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