

THE COURTSHIP PRACTICES OF  
THREE GENERATIONS OF  
MARRIED WOMEN

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Changes have occurred in the heterosexual activities through three generations of married women. Past generations have found it difficult to understand the changing courtship customs from one generation to another. The writer sought to determine how heterosexual activities had changed, and what precipitated the changes. The authorities in marriage and family relations have been assuming that there were changes in time spent together by the courting partners and that parental supervision has lessened; that the places of dating activities are no longer limited to the home and church and that love affairs were taken more seriously by the older generation (1).

#### Need for the Investigation

A review of the literature revealed one study had been done on the courtship changes between generations. Marvin R. Koller (21) did a study pertaining to "Some Changes in Courtship Behavior in Three Generations of Ohio Women." This study is reviewed in detail in the section on review of the literature. Related studies of courtship through one and two generations are available, but specific studies regarding courtship changes through three generations are at a minimum. Burgess and Locke (6) state: ". . . such a study would make possible a functional interpretation of courtship behavior in its relation to the systems of

family relations and the community situations of the three periods" (p. 394). Authorities (1, 2) in the field suggest that the home plays a dominate part in determining the courtship practices of each generation. Past studies reveal that previous wars affected courtship patterns; thus, with the culmination of the Korean conflict, the social, cultural and economic metamorphosis which has occurred since the Koller (21) study, the writer felt that courtship activities should again be re-examined.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study of courtship changes and practices was fourfold: (1) to perceive the amount of parental approval of courtship as indicated by the degree of restriction and control of dating, (2) to determine the intensity of courtship activities as indicated by the degree of involvement and the time spent on dates, (3) to delineate the span of years between the onset of courting behavior and its termination in marriage, and (4) to discover what changes (if any) occurred in the kinds of activities which were engaged in during courtship.

#### Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses are that the heterosexual activities have changed. Among these changes are: (a) time spent together has increased. (b) parental supervision has lessened, (c) the places of dating activities are no longer limited to the home and church, and (d) serious love affairs have been fewer for the older generation.

## Terminology of the Study

The terms below have been used interchangeably throughout the study to refer to heterosexual activities with or without mate selection and marriage as their goal.

### Courting Experience

A courting experience was referred to as that of being engaged in an evening's activity with the opposite sex.

### Keeping Company

Keeping company was a term used by the older generation and in this study was defined as being with a young man for an evening's entertainment.

### Dating and Going With

"Dating" and "Going with" were used in this study by the middle and younger generation as meaning to be with a boy friend for an evening's activity.

## Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study are confined to three generations of married women. The focus of the investigation was on the courtship activities of the three generations beginning at age 13 and terminating with the first marriage. The study is limited by the memory and recall of the subjects and by other emotional biases that were not possible to control by the writer. The sample included for the third generation only women who were married during the years of 1950 to 1960. Inasmuch as social changes in the use of the same words would not have been clearly understood by all generations, distortion in meaning may have

resulted. In an effort to gain as much homogeneity as possible, the study was limited to those living within the United States and to those who were members of the Caucasian race.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Historical Background of Courtship Changes

Many social and cultural changes have taken place in the United States since colonial times. A change in courtship customs and practices has accompanied these cultural changes. Previously the family exerted considerable influence on courtship in directed and specific ways (1).

#### From Parental Choice of Mate to Free Choice of Mate

The section which follows is a review of the literature showing that present courtship practices have changed from parental to free choice of mate. For example, Burgess and Locke (6) state:

Arrangements for marriage with the colonial Puritan family took place without courtship. Parents might dictate the choice of mate although in most cases the preferences of young people were followed. The attention of the parents was concentrated upon the pecuniary aspects of the match and upon settling the financial arrangement between the two families (p. 317).

Goodsell (14) confirms this:

To be sure, the American colonists were as shrewd bargainers with respect to marriage contracts as were their English forefathers; and they took good care to see that a dowry, big or little, went with the woman of their choice (p. 360).

Not only the family, but also the government exercised power in mate selection and to those brave maidens and lads who did not entertain thoughts of matrimony on their own, their elders brought them face to face with its importance. The various laws passed from time to time

in the colonies made it quite obvious that the taking of a wife was expected by one and all. In several colonies, bachelors paid special taxes. Baber (1) cites that in 1695, the town of Eastham, Massachusetts issued the following order: "Every unmarried man in the township shall kill six blackbirds or three crows while he remains single; as a penalty for not doing it, shall not be married until he obeys this order" (p. 92). Baber (1) comments: "Young people established their home early, for there was scant comfort for bachelors or maids in New England" (p. 92).

Courtship was not viewed as an aspect of pleasure but from the standpoint of necessity. The customs for courtship and marriage in the European countries of its origin were to be the guides for the modern world; however, the new conditions of the life encountered in the new country transformed these conditions rapidly. Here-to-fore women had been kept in isolation and seclusion, but in the new surroundings they were of necessity a part of the immediate life. This change did not come about all at once, for the change in the demands was a result of the demands of a greater emphasis on the role and the function that she was to have in her new home. With the emancipation from parental control, individual choice unconsciously gained a dominate place in courtship. As was previously cited (13) parents gave much attention to financial aspects in the choice of mate. The writer concludes that the age of the man was of necessity greater than that of the woman in marriage as it was assumed that he would be established financially before he took a bride. Glick (12) states that in 1890, the median age of the husband at marriage was 26.1 years; . . . the median age of the wife at marriage was 22.0 years, . . . (p. 125). A man of the same age as the girl more than likely would not have been able to have accumulated the desired

amount of goods necessary to bargain with her family for her hand in marriage. Glick (12) also states that in 1950, the median age of the husband at marriage was 22.8 years of age and that of the wife was 20.0 years. The most common ages for marriage in 1955 were 21 and 22 years for men and 18 and 19 for the women (pp. 54-57).

The investigator is inclined to believe that the young girls of today marry the young men on "the gamble for tomorrow." The girls of colonial times were assured of security when they married, as the man was well established in his livelihood. The writer concludes that the girls of today marry on faith that the young man of their choosing will in time be the "man of the year" or they must be willing to take the chance that they will struggle together for their joint livelihood. The girl of today is not as concerned with what the young man now possesses as what they anticipate that he will possess in their future together. Moreover she may plan to help him achieve family financial security by assuming her share of the provider function.

From Parental Supervision to Little Supervision but Parental Influence and Interest

Early in the eighteenth century, writers (1, 13, 15) were concerned over the lack of parental supervision during the courtship of young ladies. This concern indicates that customs were changing. Baber (1) cites: "Young people mingled quite freely at social gatherings and dances, and the young men were permitted to accompany the girls home afterwards without the elders' chaperonage" (p. 93).

However, the freedom implied by those concerned was more complicated than it appeared on the surface, as it was necessary to secure parental

approval before courting began. Goodsell (14) stated that considerable freedom was allowed where parental approval availed. Courtship activities were, for the most part, done at home and under the watchful eye of both parents and siblings. Courtship arrangements were often made by the parents. In support of this idea, Baber writes: (1)

The diary of Judge Sewall, of Massachusetts, revealed some of the courting customs of the day. His daughter Mary was "set up in marriage" without much difficulty, after her suitor had courted her in her home nearly every night for some months; but another daughter, Betty, caused him much anxiety by refusing suitors acceptable to her father (p. 93).

Courtship in the colonies was not stereotyped and routinized as the colonists brought with them some interesting customs. One custom which created much controversy among parents and the clergy was bundling.

Webster (31) defines bundling as: "Bundle: (bundled, bundling). To occupy the same bed without undressing;--said of a man and woman, especially during courtship" (p. 134). Turner (29) defines bundling as:

Two forms of bundling must be distinguished: that which involves no more than the admission of a benighted traveller to the bed of a humble home (a practice which has inspired so many commercial traveller jokes); and that in which a couple of sweethearts, fully or partly dressed, share the same bed, and dally in it, subject to certain restraints, moral or physical (p. 122).<sup>1</sup>

The writer has concluded that the knowledge available on the origin and purposes of bundling is still as much a controversy among historians today as it was in the days when it was practiced. The purposes of bundling are cited by Doten (10) in his book The Art of Bundling.

Reference is made to comments of Charles Adam's, thus:

Adams does, however, stress the most important features of the environment which produced the bundling technique, namely the isolation of country life, the infrequency of leisure, the relative costliness of light and fuel. To these should be added the actual scarcity of beds in a day when a bed was often the most important item in a will, and

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<sup>1</sup>The spelling in this quote is in accordance with the author's.

always a cherished family possession. Furthermore, sofas were not introduced until about 1750, and were then for a long time a city luxury whose immoral influence was strongly suspected by honest bundling country folks (p. 24).

Certainly at this particular time, parental supervision must have been at an all time high. For it is evident that this practice could not have been done without the full knowledge and consent of the parents. As has been cited previously in this review, the religious and home activities were so very closely related that any difference appeared to be indefinable or inseparable. Opinions among parents and among the clergy were sharply divided as to the merits of bundling. An interesting difference of opinion within the clergy is cited by Baber (1):

The Rev. Samual Peters, who was called by his enemies learned but unscrupulous, defended bundling stoutly . . . bundling took place only in the cold season of the year and that the sofa in summer was more dangerous than the bed in winter. He supported his argument with the statement that, about the year 1756, Boston, Salem, Newport, and New York, considering bundling rather crude for polite society, tried to abolish it by introducing the sofa to render courtship "more palatable and Turkish" (as the Reverent put it), with the result that far more "natural consequence," occurred than under the older system of courtship. He said bundling was infinitely better than the Spanish mode of "forcing young people to prattly only before the lady's mother the chitchat of artless lovers."

But other ministers opposed bundling. Jonathan Edwards thundered against the practice with all his fiery eloquence. In Dedham, Mass., the Rev. Jason Havon, convinced that the increase in immorality was largely attributable to "the custom, then prevalent, of females admitting young men to their beds," preached a powerful sermon against it (pp. 95-96).

With attention focused on the practice as it was in the middle of the eighteenth century, bundling slowly declined in the latter part and survived in only a few places after the turn of the century. However, the colonial lovers were not to be deprived of their privacy and the courting stick replaced bundling in some localities. Ninkoff (25) describes the courting stick as: "hollow sticks about one inch in diameter and six or eight feet long, fitted with mouth and ear piece"

(p. 78). Thus the young couple conversed with each other in the midst of their families and had a degree of privacy.

#### From Limited Social Contact to Frequent Contact

As the frontier pushed forward, the effects of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century became apparent. Urbanization resulted in changed family patterns as well as changing courtship practices.

As the industrial revolution brought about rapid changes, the twentieth century was to change the courtship practices even more.

Turner (29) confirms this:

The first world war did much to uncomplicate the state of courtship. Man's fundamental urge had been refined by religion, enriched by romance, checked by manners, challenged by philosophy. Now it was to reassert itself more crudely (p. 207).

The more permissive living accepted during the crucial period had extended far into the years of peace which followed. Turner (29) comments further: "With parental authority sloughed off at the first opportunity, boys and girls sought each other's company earlier and made love earlier" (p. 209). Courtship was no longer confined within the limits of home or church. Turner (29) cites: "Courting ceased to be a home recreation-- and the word was passe, anyway" (p. 209). The decline of parental control and the rise of individualism was an important factor and affected the courtship process. Baber (1) reflects this feeling:

The decline of religious authority; the rise of science; the urbanization of population, which decreases primary contacts and increases the proportion of secondary, impersonal contacts; . . . these and other factors are contributing to a philosophy of individualism . . . (pp. 243-244).

He theorized further that the growing sentiment and philosophy of individualism are having a devastating effect on marriage (p. 244).

Sentiments ran high as to the underlying cause of individualism. Many concluded that the family was "falling apart," and soon the American family would be extinct. However Folsom (11) took another viewpoint of the rise of individualism. He contended that the family was not necessarily disorganized nor demoralized, but that it was in the process of reevaluation.

The family is changing its functions and values as well as its structure. Indeed some values which were high upon our cultural scale are descending, although they may remain high upon many personal scales. But other values go up the scale. There is always avvaluation (increased strength of value) as well as devaluation. . . . Human beings and family groups have shown themselves able to build schemes of values to guide their own lives even amid outward confusion and devaluation (p. 192).

Family influence was still felt, according to Bates (2), but in a more subtle way.

1. Parents by and large still play highly significant roles in the courtship of their children.
2. Both parents play more positive roles in the courtship of daughters than of sons.
3. Mothers take more part in the courtship of both sons and daughters than do fathers.
4. In many instances parents adopt nonauthoritarian patterns of control and thus avoid open conflict. Mothers have more influences than fathers on the child's courtship (pp. 483-486).

A study done by Koller (21) revealed that: Parental approval of the courtships was sought by all the generations and usually granted (p. 92). While the surface appearance of our American courtship is that of individualism, Hollingshead (17) has found that there are certain cultural controls limiting this freedom. He comments that:

1. Mates are selected for individuals by controls imposed on them by their culture.
2. Young people are likely to marry persons of their own kind and from their own cultural background although they are free to choose the exact person.

3. . . . racial mores place the strongest, most explicit and most precise limits on an individual as to whom he may or may not marry.
4. . . . the effects of religious rules also restrict the choice of mate (pp. 619-627).

It appears that there has been a movement away from the direct control that parents once had to the indirect methods of control imposed upon the couple by society. Kirkpatrick (19) cites that parents control the dating behavior of their sons and daughters by their approval or disapproval. "That there is a tendency for fathers to resist their daughters' dating more than their sons', while mothers tend to encourage their daughters' more than their sons' first dating experience" (p. 264). In the same study done by Koller (21) he found that:

1. There was increasing disapproval of boys dated through the generations.
2. The third generation offered the greatest resistance to parental disapproval.
3. Formal chaperonage of courtship appears to have been a rarity in all generations while the informal controls have been relaxed so that by the third generations, chaperonage, whether formal or informal is a rarity (pp. 90-91).

We may conclude then, that parental control has changed from that of direct control to that of subtle approvals and disapprovals which influence the dating of the youth of today.

Distance that had once limited the social contacts of the people of colonial days to that of the county fair and the church was overcome by the more rapid means of transportation and communication. The theatre, commercial entertainment and the school now serve as means to more frequent contact among the sexes. Goodsell (14) comments:

As the eighteenth century advanced, social life became freer and more pleasure-loving throughout the colonies. The severest phases of the struggle for existence in the new land were past and even in New England the harsh Puritan was gradually becoming softened. In the

Southern and Middle colonies society became really gay and manners were characterized by more freedom and less delicacy than would be sanctioned in cultivated circles today (p. 364).

With so many outside factors influencing the behavior of the young boys and girls, parents found it increasingly difficult to understand the actions of their children. Turner (29) in referring to the boys and girls in their relationship to their parents after World War I cites: "In America the clash between the two generations was more intense than in Britain, partly because the forces of puritanism were stronger and more militantly organized" (p. 209).

The two generations had not progressed together. The courtship which once had the single function of preparation for matrimony had been superceded by a courtship process with several functions that could not be understood by the parents. Turner (29) mentions such items as the motor cars, telephones, newspapers and magazines as sources linking the unknown of the past to the understanding of the present. Wherein the older generation confined their activities to the community, home and church, the younger generation has turned to more diversified activities. Koller, (21) in his study of three generations of courtship found that:

1. The oldest generation felt that the neighborhood was a factor in their courtships while their urban granddaughters were not aware of it as playing a part in their courtship.
2. Grandmothers relied heavily upon the church for their dating activities while the granddaughters relied on the theatre and other commercial activities (p. 91).

We may conclude then, that activities have extended beyond home and church into outside activities.

From Courtship with a Single Purpose to Dating with Multi-Purposes

Courtship in the colonial days had but one purpose, -namely that of securing a mate. The stage of involvement that was once quite simple has evolved into many stages of varying degrees of emotional intensity. The time spent in courting varied, but according to Goodsell (13): "Courtships in those days were not expected to drag along, but to be gotten over with a decent haste and not too much sentiment" (p. 372). Baber (1) cites:

A determined man in search of a bride might approach a young woman previously unknown to him, propose, be accepted, and arrange for the banns to be published, all within the same day. Kidnaping of a bride-to-be by a former lover was not unknown (p. 94).

The publishing of the banns gives insight into the control exercised by the colonial government. Marriage was not controlled by the church, but by the government of the colony. Goodsell (13) describes this control as follows:

In all colonies from New Hampshire to Georgia provision was made that the banns of the marriage should be read three times in some public place. In Virginia banns were published on "three severall Sundays or holydays in the time of devyne service in the parish churches where the sayd persons dwell accordinge to the booke of common prayer. . . ." But in these southern colonies the parties intending marriage were also privileged to obtain a license from the Governor, or, later, from the county court, instead of publishing banns (pp. 382-383).

Goodsell (13) summarizes the marriage process of colonial times as:

. . . the first settlers made every attempt to safeguard the institution of matrimony and to prevent thoughtless persons from entering into the contract carelessly and without due formality. Parental consent, given to the town or county clerk personally or in writing, was everywhere required; due notice of the marriage by banns or posting or, in default of banns, by license from the Governor was demanded in all the colonies: the solemnization of marriage was regulated by law; and, finally, registration of the marriage in town or county clerk's office, or, in colonies where the Church of England was established, by the parish clerk, was a universal requirement (p. 391).

However, as more individual freedom was permitted parental control and governmental statutes declined in their influence. Burgess and Locke (6)

have outlined the transition of courtship from the sacred to the secular in terms of this transition due to the cultural changes. The stages listed and defined are as follows:

1. Colonial--a courtship in the modern sense was virtually unknown, and marriage took place with few such preliminaries.
2. Rural--as the frontier pushed forward into the farms and rural communities, courtship began to change from that of parental choice to the choice of the individual.
3. Town--the small town and the city provided opportunities for heterosexual activities; thus, courtship controls were relaxed, and the many conventional standards gave way to greater freedom.
4. Metropolitan--the period between the two World Wars and the tradition codes of courtship that had been in the process of transition now made a seemingly complete break (p. 317).

The writer has attempted to review the changing practices and functions of the past heterosexual activities of courtship.

#### From Few Stages of Involvement to Many Stages of Involvement

This section is devoted to a discussion of the few stages of involvement of the past to the many stages of involvement of the present time.

The institution of dating as it is now known to the present generation found its way into the American language sometime during or immediately after World War I. Turner (29) cites: "Dating was an activity---sometimes, indeed a tyranny---forced on the young by the young" (p. 255). In order to distinguish between the term "courtship" of past generations and "dating" of the present it is necessary to supply some descriptive definitions of each term. Duvall and Hill (10) define dating as:

Dating today is a couple-arranged pairing off for a specific social occasion. A date is made by a boy and a girl, or a man and a woman, who agree to attend a social affair or to spend a period of time with each other, for the satisfaction they get in their dating depends upon many complicated and interrelated factors (p. 3).

Simpson (27) defines dating as: "Dating is a relationship expressing freedom, lack of commitment or public obligation for any sort of future action" (p. 72). Cavan (7) defines dating as:

On the surface, a date is simply a social engagement between a boy and a girl or a man and a woman; its purpose is recreational and each date is an end in itself . . . The final objective, whether conscious or unconscious is marriage (p. 68).

On the other hand "courtship" of the past generations was directed toward mate choice and marriage from its onset. Waller (30) describes the functioning of courtship in the past thus: "In earlier times every step of courtship had a customary meaning and constituted a pressure toward taking the next step, a sort of applied commitment toward marriage" (pp. 371-380).

Opinions on the new stage called dating differed sharply and one of the writers in the field of family relationship reflected the sentiments of the thirties. Waller (30) cites:

Because of our complex dynamic and rapidly changing society, courtship practices have changed and dating has resulted, with the emergence of "thrill-seeking and exploitative" type of relationship between the sexes (pp. 371-380).

In his study of 1929, Waller (30) concluded that: "dating was based on purely material factors, was superficial, a dalliance or time filling process and served no useful function as a step toward matrimony" (pp. 371-380).

Since then, Margaret Mead (24) has observed the dating patterns of youth in America as being competitive and exploitative. In 1950, Blood (4) did a re-study of Waller's (30) "Dating and Rating Complex," and concluded that Waller's (30) findings were not applicable to the dating situation of the fifties. Further, Blood (3) saw dating as preparation for marriage in several important ways, specifically in:

1. gaining acquaintance with the opposite sex, 2. becoming acquainted with individual personalities, 3. trying out relationships, 4. acquiring skill in human interaction, 5. becoming emotionally weaned from parents, and 6. finding the right person (p. 14-20).

In another study by Blood (4) factors which play an important part in the choice of a dating partner were identified. They are to choose a person who: is pleasant and cheerful, has a sense of humor, is a good sport, is natural, is considerate, and is neat in appearance (p. 580). Christensen (8) summarizes the qualities boys and girls desire in dating partners as being:

physically and mentally fit; dependable, can be trusted; takes pride in personal appearance and manners; clean in speech and action; pleasant disposition and a sense of humor; considerate of me and others; acts own age and is not childish (p. 580).

Wolford (32) found other factors related to the dating behavior of adolescents; that the personal and family factors influenced the dating of the individual as well as did his family's attitudes toward him and his dating. While the personal and family background factors are related to the individual in dating, Lowrie (22) cites factors which influence the frequency of dating.

1. Cultural standards which affect association between the sexes may preclude, hinder or promote dating.
2. Frequency of dating varies from section to section of the country, from rural to urban and from small to large cities in the same section (pp. 46-51).

Hollingshead (17) theorized that:

Sex was a factor. Women of any specific age date more frequently than men of the same age. That the age at which the individual begins to date is a factor in the frequency of dating among those playing the field. The earlier individuals begin to date--at least down to twelve years, the more frequently they date (pp. 619-627).

Koller (21) found changes in the dating habits of three generations as:

1. For the grandmothers, dating their men was an event of the week; for the granddaughters dating became almost an event of the day.

2. The frequency of dates increased from the first generation through the second to the third.
3. The grandmothers relied heavily upon the church for their dating activities while the granddaughters relied on the theatre and other commercial activities.

Duvall and Hill (10) gave the stages of involvement in dating from the least to the greatest in commitment as:

not dating, casual dating with different persons, frequent dates with one person, going steady, (for convenience or security), going steady with marriage as a possibility, informal engagement, formal engagement with marriage (pp. 33-34).

Some of the stages of involvement are self explanatory, i.e., not dating, casual dating with different persons, frequent dates with one person and formal engagement. However, other stages, i.e., going steady, (for convenience or security), and the informal engagement are in need of clarification. One of the stages evolving out of the dating complex is that of "going steady." Here again, there are degrees and intensity in this stage. Going steady for convenience or security means only that the persons involved prefer going steady rather than to take a chance on not having a dating partner. In a study of adolescent dating Herman (16) found that:

1. Two types of going steady patterns now exist, one oriented to marriage the other a dalliance relationship.
2. Going steady was characteristic pattern of the Junior and Senior year in high school.
3. Going steady was a means of providing a degree of date security to those who practiced it.
4. Going steady for college oriented students was more likely than not to be a dalliance relationship (pp. 36-40).

Associated in the more serious stage of going steady is "pinning." Pinning may be described as: the pinning of a boy's fraternity pin on his girl. Duvall and Hill (10) refer to "being pinned" as a stage

of commitment between that of going steady and the formal engagement (p. 39). The function that it serves is that of a compatibility testing before the "promise to marry" has taken on much impetus. In the traditional pattern of courtship this stage was called "keeping steady company." Simpson (27) cites: "Courtship begins where casual dating ends. In dating the field is played, in courtship the field has been narrowed to a single partner" (p. 89).

One factor complicating courtship at the present time is that of romantic love. Duvall and Hill (9) states:

The romantic myth says that love goes on forever. Yet the indications are that many persons find that what they thought was love did not last more than a few weeks. In many of its aspects romantic love is not particularly pleasant (p. 51).

The following evidence confirms the beliefs of the writer that the young people of today, romantic as they appear to be on the surface, do recover emotionally from broken love affairs. In a study Kirkpatrick and Caplow (20) found that:

The students love affairs concerning feelings after breaking off with the person whom they were once in love, did not involve serious emotional traumas (p. 622).

. . . the most frequently reported curve was regular, beginning with indifference, moving slowly or precipitately upward through attraction to love and then dropping again to indifference (p. 621).

### Influence of the Romantic Complex on Courtship Changes

The "romantic complex," as referred to by historians and sociologists, had its birth in Europe but its growth in the United States. In as much as the history of "romanticism" is extensive, the description of the romantic complex will be limited in this study to the influence that romanticism has had on the courtship practices in the United States.

"Romantic love" is said to have originated with the chivalrous knights and the lovely ladies of the feudal system. The love of the lady was given in part, not only to her lord; but also to the gallant knight or wandering troubadour. Burgess and Locke (6) state:

A more tenable theory, however, derives the romantic love of modern times from the social lives of royal courts in the seventeenth century, particularly from that of France, which set the manners and style for the polite society of Europe (p. 319).

In the United States, however, Turner (29) describes love in the romantic sense at the close of the eighteenth century as being at a low ebb:

Love was never nearer to extinction than in America at the close of the eighteenth century, according to alarmed visitors from the Continent of Europe. Young people, it appeared, were allowed an astonishing freedom of intercourse . . . yet their relations were passionless (p. 186).

There appears to have been a revival, however, for in the early part of the twentieth century, popular songs, advertisements, movies, T. V., and magazines have all been focused on the love and sexual feelings of the individual. From the late twenties to the late forties the romantic myth held that there was a one and only love partner and that the "ideal" boy and girl for every person existed somewhere. Emphasis was placed upon the "love" feelings, that of the fast pant of the breath and erratic beat of the heart. Folsom (11) cites:

In America especially with its democracy, its mobility of population, and its breakdown of family authority, young people have been encouraged by romantic literature to follow the caprice of their feelings in choosing a life partner (p. 544).

At the mid-century an authority (23) in writing about love states:

Love is a passionate and abiding desire on the part of two or more people to produce together the conditions under which each can be and spontaneously express his real self; to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish, far superior to what either could achieve alone (p. 7).

The writer sees this definition as a synthesis of romantic and conjugal love which is the direction most authorities would predict love will be taking in the last half of the twentieth century.

The writer concludes that the engagement period is a proving ground for compatibility testing and to determine to what extent the young persons involved are "in love." As to a recommended length for the engagement period, in order to test the emotional involvement, Duvall and Hill (10) make the following statement:

Engagements need to be long enough to act as a screening device to alienate and separate incompatible couples who would otherwise marry, only to separate more painfully after some years of marriage. The answer to the question of length of engagement is given best, not as a definite number of months or years, but in terms of the indefinite "long enough." The engagement, then, should be long enough to perform the many functions of testing, discussing, learning, fighting, and loving which underlie successful marriage. If the student requires a more specific figure, it is probably safe to state that the engagement should rarely be shorter than six months and rarely longer than two years, depending on the length of previous acquaintance and the extent to which the engagement functions have already been started in the courtship period (p. 124).

A study done by Terman (28) in 1938, shows that the average length of engagement as five years. In 1951, Koller (21) cited the average length of engagement as six months. While in 1952, Hollingshead (18) cites the average length of engagement as 10 months.

#### Summary of the Review of Literature

The review of literature indicates that courtship practices have been altered considerable since early colonial days. Changes of courtship patterns have been influenced by the many social, cultural, and industrial advancements in the nation.

The practice of parental control of courtship has been superceded by free choice of mate. The activities of the youth no longer are

restrained by parental supervision; never-the-less young people admit to being indirectly influenced by the approval or disapproval of the parents.

The activities participated in by couples in courtship are no longer confined to the home, church, or community; instead a wider scope is provided through the mediums of modern transportation and communications.

Courtship as a process has evolved from a simple stage directed toward marriage to many complicated stages of involvement, each depending upon the other and culminating in marriage. One factor influencing this transitional change was the growth and acceptance of the romantic complex as a factor in courtship. In the colonial courtship little emphasis was placed on romanticism, but as the cultural, social, and industrial changes occurred, the people came to regard free choice of a mate as a democratic privilege and romanticism reached its peak.

Marriage was the single goal of past courtships while the present courtship practices serve many functions and a succession of sub-goals such as aiding the youth (1) in developing of his individual social personality, (2) in becoming better acquainted with like and opposite sex, and (3) in acquiring skills in human interaction. Eventually, however, courtship practices of the present have as their goal mate selection and marriage. To meet the goal of mate selection in the present era three stages of courtship which precede the actual engagement have developed. They are "going steady," "pinning," and "engaged to be engaged." Marking as they do progressive degrees of involvement, they allow for greater testing of the relationship all along the way with the additional advantage of allowing for dissolution of the relationship without serious ego hurt at any stage before engagement. Even the engagement may be broken with social approval if the pair find themselves

incompatable. "Better a broken engagement than a broken marriage" is a common adage.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE AND SAMPLE

#### Procedure

It was hypothesized that the heterosexual activities have changed. Among these changes are: time spent together has increased, parental supervision has lessened, kinds of dating activities have changed from religious to other sources and serious love affairs have been fewer for the older generation.

The purpose of the study was fourfold: (1) to perceive the amount of parental approval of courtship as indicated by the degree of restriction and control of dating, (2) to determine the frequency of courtship activities as indicated by the time spent on dates, and the number of times engaged, (3) to delineate the span of years between the onset of courting behavior and its termination in marriage, and (4) to discover what changes (if any) occurred in the kinds of activities which were engaged in during courtship.

After exploring the literature the questionnaire method seemed to be the only feasible and practicable approach. A general information sheet was developed for use in obtaining data concerning a three generational lineage. Items included were those of living parents, religion, education, occupation of the respondents, date of marriage, and living areas of the respondents. The questionnaire was concerned with the actual courtship experiences of the respondents.

For the purpose of making a pre-study of the instrument the questionnaire was given to two maternal grandmothers, two mothers, and two daughters in the presence of the writer. The writer made notations of questions raised during the interview and rephrased or deleted those questions which were ambiguous or biased. The writer concluded that a brief questionnaire with a minimum number of statements would possibly encourage more of the participants to complete and return it than would one that was more time consuming. An attempt was made in the final questionnaire to state the factual questions first and the more emotion-laden questions last in order to arouse less resistance in the respondents and, in-so-doing, to get more accurate replies.

A total of 195 questionnaires were distributed and collected during the period from September, 1960 to January, 1961. A return of 112 individual questionnaire by January 31, 1961, the "cut-off date," represented fifty-one per cent of all questionnaires released. Twenty-five complete sets of three generation sequences composed the sample.<sup>1</sup> The remaining twenty-seven per cent were from broken series, and for that reason were not useable in that the investigator wished to investigate only complete sequences of three maternal generations.

#### Description of the Sample

The respondents were volunteers recruited through various church and civic organizations. Contacts by the writer were also made individually. Only those subjects who were mentally competent and capable of completing their own questions were selected. As much as was possible, the questionnaires were given to the young married women who, in turn,

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<sup>1</sup>A sequence refers to a daughter, her mother and a maternal grandmother of the same maternal lineage.

explained the study and the questionnaires to their mothers and their maternal grandmothers.

The sample was chosen from among young women who had two living female ancestors. Certain factors, such as age and age at marriage of the third generation were matched, but the same characteristics in the past generations were similar only with regard to having been of the same generation.

A description of the sample shown that it was non-representative in several respects. The first characteristic is that of the religious affiliation of the generations as shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF RESPONDENTS FROM  
THREE FEMALE GENERATIONS

| Religious<br>Affiliation | <u>Generations</u> |        |       |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                          | First              | Second | Third |
| Catholic                 | 0                  | 0      | 0     |
| Protestant               | 25                 | 25     | 25    |
| Jews                     | 0                  | 0      | 0     |
| Other                    | 0                  | 0      | 0     |
| TOTAL                    | 25                 | 25     | 25    |

The organizations and the social contacts of the writer through which respondents were solicited were in a predominately Protestant area; therefore, a Protestant sample was more probably and possible.

TABLE II  
 EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ATTAINED BY RESPONDENTS  
 FROM THREE MARRIED FEMALE GENERATIONS

| Years of<br>Schooling | <u>Generations</u> |       |        |        |       |        |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                       | First              |       | Second |        | Third |        |
|                       | No.                | %     | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| 5                     | 1                  | 4.00  | 0      | 0.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 6                     | 1                  | 4.00  | 0      | 0.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 7                     | 0                  | 0.00  | 0      | 0.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 8                     | 8                  | 32.00 | 3      | 12.00  | 0     | 0.00   |
| 9                     | 3                  | 12.00 | 1      | 4.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 10                    | 0                  | 0.00  | 1      | 4.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 11                    | 1                  | 4.00  | 2      | 8.00   | 3     | 12.00  |
| 12                    | 6                  | 24.00 | 9      | 36.00  | 13    | 52.00  |
| College               |                    |       |        |        |       |        |
| 1                     | 0                  | 0.00  | 1      | 4.00   | 1     | 4.00   |
| 2                     | 3                  | 12.00 | 3      | 12.00  | 3     | 12.00  |
| 3                     | 0                  | 0.00  | 1      | 4.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| 4                     | 2                  | 8.00  | 4      | 16.00  | 5     | 20.00  |
| TOTAL                 | 25                 | 100.0 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |
| Mean                  |                    | 10.36 |        | 12.60  |       | 12.96  |
| Median                |                    | 9.00  |        | 12.00  |       | 12.00  |

Table II records the educational level attained by each generation. The first generation reported that forty per cent attended or completed grammar school. Forty per cent of the first generation reported reaching a level between the ninth and twelfth grade while twenty per cent attended or completed college. The mean grade of the first generation's educational attainment was 10.36 years. The median grade attainment was through the ninth grade.

The second generation's educational level indicates that twelve per cent attended or graduated from high school, while thirty-six per cent attended or graduated from college. The mean of the second generation's educational attainment is 12.60 years. The median grade attainment was through the twelfth grade.

The sample from the third generation reported their educational attainment as all having obtained a grammar school education. Twelve per cent of the sample recorded reaching or completing the eleventh grade in high school with fifty-two per cent graduating; thus, leaving thirty-six per cent attending or graduating from college. The mean grade of the third generation's educational attainment is 12.96. The median grade attainment was 12 years. All of the third generation reported their educational attainment exceeded the level of grammar school.

The areas in which the sample lived were reported in Table III as: ninety-six per cent of the maternal grandmothers and mothers lived in average or above residential areas. While ninety-two per cent of the younger generation resided in areas average or above. The writer can not accurately compute the social economic level of the sample as the investigator did not secure data on the occupations of the husbands

of the respondents. However, the writer conjectures that the sample was from the upper middle class.

TABLE III  
LIVING AREAS OF THE RESPONDENTS

| Genera-<br>tion | Very<br>Exclusive | Better<br>Suburban |       | Above<br>Average |       | Average |       | Below<br>Average |      | Lower |      |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------|------------------|-------|---------|-------|------------------|------|-------|------|
|                 |                   | N.                 | %     | N.               | %     | N.      | %     | N.               | %    | N.    | %    |
| Older           |                   | 1                  | 4.00  | 11               | 44.00 | 12      | 48.00 | 1                | 4.00 | 0     | 0.00 |
| Middle          |                   | 3                  | 12.00 | 8                | 32.00 | 13      | 52.00 | 1                | 4.00 | 0     | 0.00 |
| Younger         |                   | 3                  | 12.00 | 4                | 16.00 | 16      | 64.00 | 2                | 8.00 | 0     | 0.00 |
| TOTAL           |                   | 7                  |       | 23               |       | 41      |       | 4                |      |       |      |

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

#### The Findings

The following tables present the findings and interpretations from the data collected using the questionnaires. All tables pertain to changes in courtship activities of the three female generations in the sample.

#### Parental Control of Courtship Practices

Table IV shows the percentage of the respondents in each generation whose parents approved of the young men whom they dated. A large majority of the young men who courted the women of the sample were approved by the parents. The sample is not sufficiently large to indicate whether or not the slight increase in disapproval of parents that occurred in the second and third generations will establish a trend.

TABLE IV

#### PARENTAL APPROVAL OF BOYS DATED BY RESPONDENTS

| Items       | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|-------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|             | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|             | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| YES         | 24          | 96.00  | 21     | 94.94  | 21    | 87.50  |
| NO          | 1           | 4.00   | 2      | 5.66   | 3     | 12.50  |
| No Response | 0           | 0.00   | 2      | --     | 1     | --     |
| TOTAL       | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

Generally speaking, courtship partners of the sample were known to the girls parents as illustrated in Table V.

The first and third generation of parents were all acquainted with the daughter's young men, but about four per cent in the second generation were not acquainted with the courting partners of their daughters. Only one out of the entire sample reported an absence of acquaintance. This raises a question. Could it be that the parents refused their daughters' being courted by those not known to the family? Or were their acquaintances so limited that there were none available with whom their parents were not acquainted?

TABLE V  
PARENTAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH COURTSHIP PARTNER  
OF RESPONDENTS

| Item           | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|----------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|                | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Acquainted     | 25          | 100.00 | 23     | 92.00  | 25    | 100.00 |
| Not Acquainted | 0           | 0.00   | 1      | 4.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| No Response    | 0           | 0.00   | 1      | 4.00   | 0     | 0.00   |
| TOTAL          | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

The table which follows (Table VI) shows the findings on the question: "While you were living at home were your parents acquainted with the boys or girls whom you dated?"

TABLE VI  
PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR COURTING NON-ACQUAINTANCE  
OF PARENTS OF RESPONDENTS

| Item                         | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                              | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|                              | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Parental Permission Obtained |             |        |        |        |       |        |
| YES                          | 9           | 36.00  | 8      | 32.00  | 12    | 48.00  |
| NO                           | 14          | 56.00  | 14     | 56.00  | 12    | 48.00  |
| No Response                  | 2           | 8.00   | 3      | 12.00  | 1     | 4.00   |
| TOTAL                        | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

About one-third of the first and second generations permitted their daughters to be courted by young men with whom they were not acquainted, while about fifty per cent of the third generation permitted their daughters to go out with young men with whom they were not acquainted. The change from one generation to the next is not in a progressive sequence.

The findings in Table VII suggest that generally speaking twice as many respondents of the three generations carried on their courtships without being required to get parental consent as those who had to get parents' approval.

However, the need for getting parental approval appears to have decreased with each generation (from forty per cent to thirty-two per cent to twenty per cent respectively).

These findings suggest that the courtship choices were more dependent on the judgment of the daughters and that the present generation is allowed more freedom than were the others.

TABLE VII  
COURTSHIP WITH OR WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT

| Item            | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |       |        |
|-----------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
|                 | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        | Total |        |
|                 | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      | No.   | %      |
| With consent    | 10          | 40.00  | 8      | 32.00  | 5     | 20.00  | 23    | 30.66  |
| Without consent | 14          | 56.00  | 17     | 68.00  | 19    | 76.00  | 50    | 66.66  |
| No Response     | 1           | 4.00   | 0      | 0.00   | 1     | 4.00   | 2     | 2.68   |
| TOTAL           | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 | 75    | 100.00 |

Tables VIII and IX indicate parental objection in dating those either younger or older.

TABLE VIII  
PARENTAL OBJECTION TO RESPONDENTS BEING COURTED BY INDIVIDUALS  
MORE THAN TWO YEARS YOUNGER

| Item         | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|--------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|              | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|              | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Objection    | 5           | 20.00  | 5      | 20.00  | 10    | 40.00  |
| No Objection | 14          | 56.00  | 15     | 60.00  | 13    | 52.00  |
| No Response  | 6           | 24.00  | 5      | 20.00  | 2     | 8.00   |
| TOTAL        | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

The respondents of each generation were asked if their parents objected to their being courted by someone two years younger than themselves. Table VIII represents the objection or lack of objection

expressed by the parents. Twenty per cent of the parents of the first and second generation objected to their daughters dating someone more than two years younger than their daughters. The number of parents of the third generation who registered disapproval was greater than the number in the other two generations. This change is not in the expected direction. The writer conjectures that the parents of the younger generation do not entrust their daughters with those boys who are younger and the older boys are considered to have had too much sex experience for the daughter to date.

TABLE IX

PARENTAL OBJECTION TO GOING OUT WITH INDIVIDUALS MORE THAN  
TWO YEARS OLDER THAN RESPONDENTS

| Item         | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|--------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|              | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|              | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Objection    | 3           | 12.00  | 5      | 20.00  | 9     | 36.00  |
| No Objection | 20          | 80.00  | 19     | 76.00  | 15    | 60.00  |
| No Response  | 2           | 8.00   | 1      | 4.00   | 1     | 4.00   |
| TOTAL        | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

The respondents of each generation were asked if their parents objected to their being courted by someone two years older than themselves. Table IX presents the degree of objection expressed by the parents. There was a fairly consistent increase in the objection voiced by the parents from the first through the third generations with the third generation registering three times the amount of objection over

the first generation. A very small per cent did not respond to this question. A factor contributing to this might have been that the parents of the first generation were neighborhood acquaintances, thus not causing the anxiety often expressed by the present day parents when the background of the "date" is less well known. Or does this suggest that present day youth are less concerned about gaining parental approval of their courtship companions?

Not only did the respondents set a designated time to be home from a courting experience, but they also administered punishment when rules were disobeyed as shown in Tables X and XI.

TABLE X

## PUNISHMENT RECEIVED FOR BEING TARDY ON ARRIVING HOME FROM A DATE

| Item         | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|--------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|              | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|              | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Punished     | 5           | 20.00  | 10     | 40.00  | 14    | 56.00  |
| Not Punished | 18          | 72.00  | 13     | 52.00  | 10    | 40.00  |
| No Response  | 2           | 8.00   | 2      | 8.00   | 1     | 4.00   |
| TOTAL        | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

The respondents of the three generations were asked if punishment were given for tardy arrival home from a courting event. There appeared to be a consistent progression from the first to the third generation of punishment for being tardy in arriving home. Of the first generation only one-fifth were punished; of the second, two-fifths and the third, three-fifths receiving punishment for coming home late.

TABLE XI  
PARENTAL DESIGNATION OF A SET TIME FOR RESPONDENTS  
TO BE HOME

| Age Level      | Generations |       |        |       |       |       |
|----------------|-------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
|                | First       |       | Second |       | Third |       |
|                | No.         | %     | No.    | %     | No.   | %     |
| a) 13-16 years |             |       |        |       |       |       |
| Time set       | 9           | 60.00 | 11     | 71.00 | 20    | 90.99 |
| Time not set   | 4           | 40.00 | 3      | 29.00 | 2     | 9.01  |
| b) 16-20 years |             |       |        |       |       |       |
| Time set       | 13          | 65.00 | 18     | 70.82 | 19    | 79.20 |
| Time not set   | 7           | 35.00 | 5      | 29.18 | 5     | 20.80 |
| c) 20 yrs-Mg.  |             |       |        |       |       |       |
| Time set       | 4           | 33.33 | 4      | 30.71 | 3     | 23.07 |
| Time not set   | 8           | 66.67 | 9      | 69.29 | 10    | 76.93 |

Could it be that the parents of the third generation "lived more by the clock"? The writer thinks the meaning here may be that the older generation would not risk the wrath of the father and that the time to be in was implied without setting a time and might not have been an issue.

The subjects of the sample were asked whether or not their parents designated a set time for them to be home from a heterosexual activity.

From age thirteen years through twenty years there was a definite increase in the number of parents, from the first through the third

generations, who designated a set time for their daughter to be in. More women reported that their parents set a time for them to be in from a courting experience when they were between the ages of 13 and 16 years than when they were older.

The subjects of the sample reported that after they were twenty years of age their parents became less restrictive.

Table XII shows that in the oldest generation of the study one of four of the women were chaperoned; however, the second generation indicated one in six having been chaperoned. This table shows the anticipated decline in parental supervision of the dating of their daughters. Does this not suggest that formal chaperonage as experienced by the first and second generation has been eliminated? It may be the case, however, that the third generation was not conscious of the indirect methods of chaperonage used by the parents of the present day, but the writer believes that the customs have changed with the result that young women are no longer under chaperonage.

TABLE XII  
PRESENCE OF CHAPERONAGE FOR RESPONDENTS  
IN COURTSHIP ACTIVITIES

| Item           | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|----------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|                | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| Chaperoned     | 6           | 24.00  | 4      | 16.00  | 0     | 0.00   |
| Not Chaperoned | 19          | 76.00  | 21     | 84.00  | 25    | 100.00 |
| TOTAL          | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

TABLE XIII

AVERAGE HOURS SPENT IN EACH COURTSHIP ACTIVITY  
BY RESPONDENTS

| Ages           | 1 & 2 Hours | 3 & 4 Hours | 5 & 6 Hours | 7 & 8 Hours | Total Hours |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 13-16 yrs.     |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1st Generation | 1           | 6           | 0           | 0           | 7           |
| 2nd Generation | 3           | 8           | 0           | 0           | 11          |
| 3rd Generation | 7           | 14          | 0           | 0           | 21          |
| 16-20 yrs.     |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1st Generation | 3           | 13          | 4           | 0           | 20          |
| 2nd Generation | 5           | 16          | 0           | 0           | 21          |
| 3rd Generation | 0           | 17          | 7           | 0           | 24          |
| 20 yrs.-Mg.    |             |             |             |             |             |
| 1st Generation | 0           | 4           | 2           | 0           | 6           |
| 2nd Generation | 1           | 6           | 7           | 1           | 15          |
| 3rd Generation | 0           | 4           | 7           | 2           | 13          |

### Frequency of Courtship Behavior

The first twelve tables have indicated the influence of parental control. Table XIII and XIV give the time and frequency of dating, and Table XV presents the number of times the women were engaged.

Table XIII illustrates the average hours that the respondents spent in courtship activities. The general likenesses are that the length of dates of the three generations were between three and four hours each. The second and third generations, however, had dates of five hours duration in the later age period. This finding supports the general belief that young people spend longer hours together now than did their grandparents.

Subjects were asked to report the number of times per week they were allowed to court from ages thirteen years to sixteen years. Around twelve per cent of all the generations were permitted to go out once a week. None of the first generation and only two of the second generation were permitted two or more dates per week, while six of the third generation were allowed to court two or more times per week.

An interesting trend in courtship customs was revealed in the progressive limitation of courtship experiences to week-ends only. In the first generation only three were limited to week-ends only; in the second generation seven were limited, while in the third generation nine were limited to week-ends only.

The increase in the number of courtships per week may be accounted for in part by the increasing number of activities available to those doing the courting. The writer conjectures that with more emphasis being placed upon education that the parental controls on dating through the week are becoming more severe.

TABLE XIV  
NUMBER OF COURTSHIP CONTACTS PER WEEK

| Age, 13-16 yrs.   | Generations |       |        |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|--------|
|                   | Frequency   | First | Second |
| 1                 | 3           | 3     | 3      |
| 2                 | 0           | 1     | 3      |
| 3                 | 0           | 1     | 3      |
| Week ends only    | 3           | 7     | 9      |
| No restrictions   | 3           | 2     | 2      |
| No dating allowed | 13          | 11    | 3      |
| Other             | 3           | 0     | 2      |
| TOTAL             | 25          | 25    | 25     |

| Age, 16-20 yrs.   | Generations |       |        |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|--------|
|                   | Frequency   | First | Second |
| 1                 | 2           | 0     | 0      |
| 2                 | 4           | 5     | 4      |
| 3                 | 1           | 1     | 5      |
| Week ends only    | 6           | 11    | 4      |
| No restrictions   | 9           | 5     | 10     |
| No dating allowed | 1           | 1     | 0      |
| Other             | 2           | 2     | 2      |
| TOTAL             | 25          | 25    | 25     |

In general the same trend was observed in the age range from sixteen years through twenty years as was found in the age range from thirteen through sixteen years. The trend was for the third generation to be limited less in their courting experiences than the other two generations. On the other hand they were given more courting privileges than their mothers or their maternal grandmothers.

TABLE XV  
NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS OF RESPONDENTS

| Item<br>Number | Generations |        |        |        |       |        |
|----------------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                | First       |        | Second |        | Third |        |
|                | No.         | %      | No.    | %      | No.   | %      |
| 0              | 17          | 68.00  | 16     | 64.00  | 19    | 76.00  |
| 1              | 5           | 20.00  | 7      | 28.00  | 3     | 12.00  |
| 2              | 3           | 12.00  | 2      | 8.00   | 1     | 4.00   |
| 3              | 0           | 0.00   | 0      | 0.00   | 2     | 8.00   |
| TOTAL          | 25          | 100.00 | 25     | 100.00 | 25    | 100.00 |

The number of respondents in the first and second generations who were not engaged to someone other than their husbands was not significantly different as recorded in Table XV. However, there was a slight difference recorded by the third generation as over three-fourths were engaged only to their spouses. The youngest generation reported fewer multiple engagements than did their mothers or their maternal grandmothers. Could this be accounted for, in part, by the many steps of the courtship process which were not experienced by the other two generations?

The progressive stages of involvement called "going steadily," "going steady," "pinned," and "engaged to be engaged" are periods used by the younger generation for compatibility testing and they form convenient times to break the involvement prior to the actual engagement. In the older generations the engagement period was used for compatibility testing and was the most appropriate time for terminating the involvement.

### Changes In Courtship Activities

Table XVI shows where the respondents met their dating partners for the first time. There was an increase in the use of the school and other sources and a decrease in the home and church as a place of meeting heterosexual partners. The community played the dominate role in the first and second generations "meeting" place, while the school showed an increasing progression of influence from the first through the third generations. The first and second generation indicated a marked use of the church and home as sources of courting acquaintance while the third generation showed a definite decline in the use of these institutions.

TABLE XVI

SOURCE OF COURTSHIP ACQUAINTANCES OF THE RESPONDENTS

| Sources      | Generations |        |       |
|--------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|              | First       | Second | Third |
| Church       | 7           | 7      | 3     |
| Home         | 5           | 5      | 2     |
| School       | 6           | 12     | 16    |
| Community    | 10          | 13     | 7     |
| Other places | 2           | 7      | 5     |

Totals were not presented as respondents were permitted to check more than one response.

Age Range For Dating Behavior

The remaining four tables pertain to the ages at which the respondent became involved in the dating process.

TABLE XVII

AGE AT WHICH COURTING BEGAN WITH RESPONDENTS  
FROM THREE GENERATIONS OF FEMALES

| Item<br>Age in<br>Years | Generations |        |       |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|                         | First       | Second | Third |
| 12                      | 1           | 0      | 1     |
| 13                      | 1           | 4      | 9     |
| 14                      | 4           | 5      | 8     |
| 15                      | 2           | 4      | 4     |
| 16                      | 11          | 4      | 2     |
| 17                      | 3           | 3      | 0     |
| 18                      | 1           | 5      | 0     |
| 19                      | 2           | 0      | 1     |
| TOTAL                   | 25          | 25     | 25    |
| Mean                    | 15.76       | 15.48  | 14.08 |
| Median                  | 16.00       | 15.00  | 14.00 |

The first and the third generations reported the beginning of their courtship activities as early as twelve years of age while the generations in between report they began their courtship activities at the age of thirteen. The median age for the three generations was fifteen years

years of age. Only eight of the first generation had begun their courting by the fifteenth year. Thirteen of the second generation had started their dating activities by the age of fifteen. The courtship pattern as shown agreed with other findings in the field which suggest the age at which courtship begins is steadily declining.

Table XVII reveals the age at which the respondents began their courtship activities. Table XVIII summates the ages at which the respondents were courted by their husbands. Eighteen years was the median age for the first and third generation. Thirteen in the first generation had started going out with their husbands before or during their eighteenth year. Twelve of the second generation began being courted by their husbands before or during the eighteenth year while sixteen of the third generation were courted by their husbands before or during their eighteenth year.

The second generation began courting experiences a year later than the first and third generation which raises a question concerning the factors contributing to this difference. This in part might have been due to the economic recession of the late thirties. Girls may have had to assume responsibilities at home for a longer period of time, and the boys were no doubt limited in finances.

TABLE XVIII  
AGE AT WHICH COURTSHIP BEGAN WITH HUSBAND OF RESPONDENTS

| Age in Years | Generations |        |       |
|--------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|              | First       | Second | Third |
| 13           | 1           | 1      | 0     |
| 14           | 2           | 1      | 2     |
| 15           | 2           | 1      | 3     |
| 16           | 2           | 1      | 5     |
| 17           | 2           | 5      | 2     |
| 18           | 4           | 3      | 4     |
| 19           | 5           | 3      | 1     |
| 20           | 1           | 1      | 2     |
| 21           | 1           | 3      | 2     |
| 22           | 1           | 3      | 3     |
| 23           | 2           | 0      | 0     |
| 24           | 0           | 3      | 1     |
| 25           | 1           | 0      | 0     |
| No Response  | 1           | 0      | 0     |
| TOTAL        | 25          | 25     | 25    |
| Mean         | 18.25       | 19.00  | 18.40 |
| Median       | 18.00       | 19.00  | 18.00 |

TABLE XIX  
 LENGTH OF COURTSHIP WITH MAN WHO BECAME HUSBAND

| Time           | Generations |        |       |
|----------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|                | First       | Second | Third |
| 6 Mo. or less  | 6           | 5      | 3     |
| 7 Mo. to 1 yr. | 2           | 11     | 10    |
| 2 yrs.         | 7           | 3      | 4     |
| 3 yrs.         | 4           | 2      | 6     |
| 4 yrs.         | 4           | 2      | 1     |
| 5 yrs.         | 1           | 1      | 1     |
| 6 yrs.         | 0           | 1      | 0     |
| 7 rs.          | 1           | 0      | 0     |
| TOTAL          | 25          | 25     | 25    |
| Mean           | 2.30        | 1.69   | 1.83  |
| Median         | 2.00        | 1.00   | 1.00  |

The data relative to the length of courtship of the respondents with their future husbands is revealed in Table XIX. The median length of courtship for the second and third generations was one year. The median for the first generation was two years. One-third of the first generation was courted by their husbands one year or less. One-half of the third generation went out with their husbands over a period of one year or less. The writer conjectures that the difference was due to the fact that the earlier generation was probably engaged in courtship around the 1900's. Due to the mid-Victorian customs of that time it was not considered proper for a young lady to hasten her courtship.

TABLE XX  
AGE OF MARRIAGE OF RESPONDENTS

| Age in Years      | Generations |        |       |
|-------------------|-------------|--------|-------|
|                   | First       | Second | Third |
| Between 15 and 19 | 11          | 5      | 11    |
| Between 20 and 25 | 12          | 18     | 14    |
| Between 26 and 32 | 1           | 1      | 0     |
| No Response       | 0           | 1      | 0     |
| TOTAL             | 25          | 25     | 25    |
| Mean              | 19.36       | 21.33  | 19.84 |
| Median            | 20.00       | 22.00  | 20.00 |

Table XX reveals that the first and third generations had a median age at the time of marriage of twenty years, whereas the second generation at the time of marriage had a median age of twenty-two years. Likewise the first and third generation married almost equally in the two periods of fifteen years to nineteen and twenty years to twenty-five, while the second generation married predominately in the age range from twenty to twenty-five years. The second generation of women were married in the nineteen thirties, a period of economic recession which may account for the fact of their later marriage.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

Chapter IV presented a compilation of the data in the form of tables followed by an interpretation of the changes through three generations. Chapter V records the summary of the principle changes in courtship activities. In addition suggestions are made for improving and using the study in family life education.

This study was concerned with the changes in the courtship practices of three generations of married women. The purpose of this study was four-fold: (1) to perceive the amount of parental approval of courtship as indicated by the degree of restriction and control of dating, (2) to determine the intensity of courtship activities as indicated by the degree of involvement and the time spent on dates, (3) to delineate the span of years between the onset of courting behavior and its termination in marriage, and (4) to discover what changes (if any) occurred in the kinds of activities which were engaged in during courtship.

The results of the study have been organized under four major headings as defined by the purposes. Under each major heading are statement in generalized form that indicate change or lack of change in heterosexual activity.

## Results of the Study

Parental Control of Courtship Practices

- A. Generally speaking the young men who courted the young women of the sample were known or approved by the parents.
1. The prospective husbands of the sample were known to the daughters' parents.
  2. Parental permission for dating those with whom the parents were not acquainted was granted to one-third of the first and second generation, while about fifty per cent of the third generation were permitted to go with persons the parents did not know.
  3. Twice as many respondents of the three generations were allowed to date without parental approval as against those who were required to secure parents' approval.
- B. In most instances objections to age differences in dating have increased.
1. There was increasing disapproval through the three generations of daughters' dating boys two years older.
  2. There was a fairly consistent increase in the parental disapproval of the daughters' dating boys two years younger.
- C. Parents, generally, place definite restrictions and had rules for control of their daughter's heterosexual activities.
1. Respondents at the ages of thirteen to sixteen years more often had a set time designated by parents to be home from a courting experience than at a later age.
  2. From the oldest to the youngest generation there was a consistent increase of punishment received for being tardy in

arriving home from a date. This finding is inconsistent with the second hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

- D. Courtship activities are no longer chaperoned by parents.
1. Formal chaperonage of courtship appeared to have been a rarity with the older and middle generation, with conscious controls being so relaxed that none were recorded by the third generation.

#### Frequency and Timing of Courtship Behavior

- A. The frequency and timing in courtship processes have changed through the three generations.
1. The time spent together in dating activities has more than doubled through the three generations.
  2. The times of dating progressed from dates throughout the week to more emphasis on dating on week-ends only.
  3. The first and second generations experienced more love affairs terminating in engagement than did the third generation.

#### Age Range for Dating, Courtship and Marriage

- A. The age at which dating began steadily declined through the three generations.
- B. The courtship period of the first generation with the prospective mates was of longer duration than that of the other two generations.

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<sup>1</sup>This is a reversal of what would be expected as we assume the younger generation is handled with greater laxity.

- C. The women of the first and third generations were married at an earlier age than the middle generation. This finding is inconsistent with the hypothesis.

#### Changes in the Place of Courtship Activities

- A. The activities participated in by couples in courtship encompass a wider scope of activities and are no longer confined to home and immediate community.

1. The maternal grandmothers relied heavily upon the community for their dating activities while the granddaughters relied more on the school and other sources.

In the findings two inconsistencies require explanation. In the first place the discrepancy for age of marriage for the middle generation may be explained by the fact of an economic depression which influenced the delay. In the second place, the evidence that the parents of the third generation were not more permissive and that punishment was received for tardy arrival home may be due to several factors; one is that the parents of the third generation may be reluctant to trust the judgment of their daughters or the intentions of the young men. A further conjecture of the writer is that the parents of today are more time conscious than those in past generations due to the accelerated mode of living.

The findings of this investigation support the first three hypotheses of the study; namely, that the heterosexual activities have changed. Among those changes are the following: time spent together has increased, parental supervision has lessened, and the places of dating activities are no longer limited to the home and church. However, the fourth

hypothesis which reads, "serious love affairs have been fewer for the older generation," (as expressed by engagement) was not supported by the evidence in that it is the younger generation who are having fewer engagements. Several stages of involvement "going steadily," "going steady," "ringed," "pinned," and "engaged to be engaged," serve as a compatibility testing ground, with each stage increasing in importance in mate selection. Thus, the omission of some of the engagements, as recorded by the third generation, is no doubt due to this change in the involvement process. The investigator failed to determine the number and kinds of involvements before engagements; consequently, the findings may not be a true representation of the engagements of the sample.

Certain weaknesses of the study might be corrected in a future investigation. For example, because a limited sample was used here, a much larger and more representative sample of both sexes through three generations might better be selected. There is one inherent weakness difficult to improve in using the questionnaire through three generations, which has to do with cultural changes in the meanings of terms. Inasmuch as changes in the meanings of words would not have been clearly understood by all generations, distortions when answering the questions no doubt occurred. In addition, the second weakness is inherent in the fact that memory and recall of the two older generations particularly that of the first generation may impair the validity of the results. A longer period of time has lapsed since the earlier generations have engaged in courtship; thus, the feelings about these activities may have been romanticized in their thinking concerning their dating activities. On the other hand, the younger generation might be more accurate in their replies if their memories can be relied upon. In order to overcome

these deficiencies in the method used, the future researcher must find means of getting more valid responses.

### Recommendations

To validate the findings of this study the author recommends that it be repeated with another larger and more representative sample consisting of equal number of men and women of a three generational lineage.

It is further recommended that the instrument be revised (1) to include questions concerning the socio-economic status of the sample, (2) to incorporate the advance steps of the involvement process, i.e., "going steadily," "going steady," "ringed," "pinned," and "engaged to be engaged," and (3) to include a question concerning parental permission for dating.

### Educational Implications

The writer believes that those engaged in teaching family relations courses may be able to use the findings of this investigation. The history of changes of courtship may aid students in clarifying and understanding those courtship customs and practices of past generations. Through this understanding the writer believes that the knowledge gained by the students, as potential parent, will be of value in understanding their own teen-agers when they become involved in dating. Furthermore the understanding of the functions of the courtship process could be of help in pupils' evaluating their own stages of involvement as compared with those of their parents. Through this evaluation, the writer believes that student-parent conflicts could be lessened; thus, it could reduce some of the family tension that is often increased at this time.

Such teaching might also aid the young people in becoming aware of the value of the dating process. Poor marital risks may be eliminated through the realization that each stage of the involvement either brings the partners closer if they are compatible or if they are not, allows them a progression of opportunities to dissolve the relationship before the final commitment takes place. Thus having a progression of commitment stages before marriage safeguards the future choice of a mate to some limited extent.

A simplified questionnaire with questions similar to those of the study may be used to create interest and gain information on the three generations of courtship practices. Communications among the generations might in this way be improved. This, too, might increase the appreciation of young people for their parents and grandparents.

The writer sees how a panel composed of three age or four age levels might prove an informative experience for a youth or a parent education group. Topics for discussion might be the meaning of the involvement processes in the past as compared to those of the present.

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## APPENDIX

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Circle or write in the answer to the following statements.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of your marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: Catholic Protestant Jew Other

Education completed: (Circle highest grade completed)

Grammar School 3 4 5 6 7 8 High School 9 10 11 12

College 1 2 3 4 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first marriage: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been divorced? YES NO If so, REMARRIED? YES NO

WIDOWED? YES NO

Is your mother living? YES NO

Is your father living? YES NO

Is your grandmother living? YES NO

Is your grandfather living? YES NO

How many rooms in your house? \_\_\_\_\_

How many bathrooms in your house? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your house in: good, medium, or poor condition?

Is the area in which you live: (Check One)

very exclusive,  
the better suburbs,  
above average residential area,  
average residential neighborhood (no deterioration in area)  
below average (beginning to deteriorate, business entering)  
low (considerably deteriorated, run-down)?

The above information will be kept confidential and will be seen only by Doris Jean C. Wright.

## Review of Courtship History

The following information will be detached from the General Information sheet in order to lose the identity of the informer. Generalizations will be drawn from the compiled data of all questionnaires.

Please answer as frankly as possible, remembering that the personal identity will be lost.

Definition of "keeping company" (dating) as referred to in the following questions is that of being with a girlfriend or boyfriend for an evenings activity.

**DIRECTIONS:** WRITE IN OR DRAW A LINE UNDER THE ANSWER THAT BEST FITS THE DESCRIPTION.

1. At what age did you start "going with" persons of the opposite sex? \_\_\_\_\_ (dating)
  
2. How many times were you allowed to date during the week from ages:
 

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 13 years through 15 years | 1, 2, 3, times<br>Week ends only<br>No restrictions<br>No dating allowed<br>Other_____ |
| 16 years through 19 years | 1, 2, 3, times<br>Week ends only<br>No restrictions<br>No dating allowed<br>Other_____ |
  
3. What was the average number of hours spent on a date at age:
 

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| 13 years through 15 years | _____ hours? |
| 16 years through 19 years | _____ hours? |
| 20 years to marriage      | _____ hours? |
  
4. Did your parents set a time to be in when dating at age:
 

|                           |     |    |
|---------------------------|-----|----|
| 13 years through 15 years | YES | NO |
| 16 years through 19 years | YES | NO |
| 20 years to marriage      | YES | NO |
  
5. How long did you "go with" your husband or wife before marriage?  
(give answer in months or years) \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. At what age did you marry? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many times were you engaged to someone other than your husband or wife? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How old were you when you began to "keep company" with your husband or wife? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
9. Where did you become acquainted with your "courting" (dating) partners? CHURCH HOME SCHOOL COMMUNITY OTHER \_\_\_\_\_
10. While you were living at home were your parents acquainted with the boys or girls whom you dated? YES NO
11. Were you chaperoned on your dates? YES NO
12. Did your parents object to your "going with" someone more than two years older than yourself? YES NO
13. Did your parents object to your "going with" someone more than two years younger than yourself? YES NO
14. Were you allowed to date those whom your parents did not meet while you were living at home? YES NO
15. Did you receive punishment if you were not home on time from a date? YES NO
16. Did your parents approve of boys (girls) whom you dated? YES NO
17. Did you date without your parents consent? YES NO

#### COMMENTS

Do you think that courtship today differs from your courtship period?  
If so, in what way?

VITA

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Master of Science

Thesis: THE COURTSHIP PRACTICES OF THREE GENERATIONS OF MARRIED WOMEN

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