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Early Marriage: A Propositional Formulation*

KAREN WINCH BARTZ AND F. IVAN NYE**

The empirical research on early marriage is reviewed and restated in propositional form. The 23 propositions obtained are reduced to three theoretical propositions, involving social class, heterosexual involvement, and profit between single and marital status. Three derived propositions are obtained from the original theoretical propositions.

Consequences of early marriage are reviewed and stated as three propositions involving social class placement following marriage, divorce rate, and negative affect. Three derived propositions are also obtained from these. Finally, the theoretical family propositions are related to exchange theory and shown to be special cases of it.

THE "who" and "why" of youthful marriages have received considerable attention from researchers and commentators on American life during the past decade. The trend of thought passed through an initial stage of "panic" at the first realization that many more young men and women were marrying in the 1950's as compared to the pre-World War II period. Allegations that young marriages were "bound to fail" also caused considerable concern among sociologists, family life educators, and parents.

Reactions have calmed considerably since the '50's. Recent statistics indicate either a leveling off or decline in the rates of youthful marriages. A review of the 1966 *Current Population Survey* leads Parke and Glick (1967:251) to comment:

... figures that have recently become available ... show that the marriage rate among very young women reached a peak perhaps 10 to 15 years ago and is now on the decline. Twenty-three percent of all the women who are currently 30 to 34 years old married before age 18 ... Only 15 percent of all women who are currently 18 and 19 years old married before age 18.

Parke and Glick (1967) also report indications of a decline in the percent of men who marry under age 20.

Thus the rate of youthful marriages seems to be declining and predictions are that the rate will go down for a while longer and then stabilize (Parke and Glick, 1967). But while there is now a tempering of concern over youthful marriages, these unions are occurring in relatively large numbers. Census figures for 1960 showed that almost one-fourth of the women aged 18 were married. The same is true of boys

aged 20 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960). And despite many restatements of the divorce rate for youthful marriages, the statistics still point to a much lower rate of stability and marital happiness for these men and women as compared to those who married at an older age (Burchinal, 1959b; Burchinal, 1959c; Inselberg, 1961; Landis and Landis, 1958; Monohan, 1959).

Much of the systematic analysis of youthful marriages has been aimed at compiling data on race, geographic location, education, socioeconomic level and such to indicate "who" marries young. Some research, but much less, has been devoted to determining "why" these people marry—personality characteristics, social characteristics, family dynamics.

Burchinal (1960) summarized research findings previous to 1960 and listed several proposed explanations for high rates of youthful marriages. He found considerable data to support the following contributing factors:

1. The impact of war and the draft.
2. Less economic risk involved in marriage when society is prosperous—wives can work, parents contribute to the support of the young couple.
3. Early contact with the other sex.
4. Stimulation of sexual drives by the mass media and thus inability or unwillingness to postpone sexual relations.
5. Tension between parents and youth so youth want to escape unhappy home, school, or community situation.
6. Emotional maladjustment.

Moss (1965) recently summarized and categorized proposed explanatory factors for teenage marriages into three theoretical frameworks: (1) early marriage is a product of certain types of social organization; (2) early marriage is a product of social disorganization; and (3) early marriage is a product of a society's cultural settings.

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This substantive area, like many others in sociology, is characterized by considerable research but it is scattered and almost totally lacking of any integrating framework.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is the purpose of this paper to provide an integrating framework for this research. In this, the approaches of Homans (1961) and Zetterberg (1965) are employed in stating relationships in specific, probability statements. Available data are reviewed and organized into empirical propositions, which, in themselves, have low information value. These are then combined by abstracting the common element of several empirical propositions for a more theoretical proposition. Several more general derived propositions are constructed by combining the theoretical propositions. Finally, it is shown how this formulation is congruent with more general sociological theory; namely, exchange theory.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The most crucial concept to be defined at this time is that of "early marriage." Definitions of early marriage are about as numerous as the individual researchers who have been concerned with the problem. Burchinal (1960:6) stated the problem in this manner:

Lack of consistency in definition of young marriage should not be surprising since all definitions of this phenomena must be arbitrary. However, the lack of consistency creates serious problems when an attempt is made to summarize and integrate research findings about a phenomenon. . . . An obvious solution is to ignore the variations and definitions of marriage and to present findings of the available research. This simple solution is not as disconcerting as it might appear, for virtually all data . . . are for brides who were 18 years or less.

The problem is not as "simple," however, when considering the case of boys. Since boys generally mature physically, emotionally, and socially about two years later than girls, the "18 years and under" criterion is not equally appropriate for boys. Usually, legal definitions differentiate the minimum ages at which boys and girls may marry at two years younger for girls.

If we assume a two-year maturation factor for boys and extend the criterion for early marriage to 20 years of age, we find that almost one-fourth of the white males in the United States who were 20 years of age are or have been married (in 1960) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960).

Thus, we define an early marriage as *one in which the bride is 18 years of age or under and the groom is 20 years of age or under*. This definition allows us to include most marriages which involve high school students.¹

The propositions to follow have been phrased in the terms "the more likely early marriage(s) will occur." This has been used to avoid the assumption that the proposed determinants stand in linear relationship to age at marriage. Most of the available research has compared a group of "early marrieds" to a group of subjects of the same age or older. Few researchers have analyzed individual age groups within the early-married group, except to determine the incidence of premarital pregnancy. Such analysis of more variables would be necessary before we could determine the nature of the relationship between determinants and age at marriage. Thus it is not possible to establish that the greater the salience of a particular variable, the earlier the person will marry, although this is probably true. In addition, it is probably true that below a certain age level, no degree of salience for a particular determinant will lead to marriage because of physiological, psychological, sociological, or legal barriers.

EMPIRICAL PROPOSITIONS

The empirical propositions which follow are extracted from currently available research on early marriage:

1. *Within a social class, the earlier a girl or boy starts to date, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

The most recent and extensive evidence for this proposition is reported by Bayer (1968) from over 32,000 individuals who responded to a five-year follow-up on Project TALENT. The age for initiating dating was found to be earlier for subjects of higher socioeconomic status than from lower groups. However, subjects from the lower socioeconomic groups tended to marry at an earlier age. *Within* each socioeconomic group, dating prior to age 15 was found to be associated with early marriage (defined here as being before 21 years of age for females and 23 years of age for males). The relationship between early dating and early marriage also held true for both sexes.

¹ These ages of course are specifically relevant to contemporary American society; other definitions would be necessary for other societies. To avoid this problem it has been suggested that it be defined as "marriage age more than one standard deviation earlier than the mean age." Commitment to basing propositions upon available research makes it difficult to employ such a definition in this paper.

Additional support for Proposition 1 is found in Burchinal (1959e). Of three hypotheses on adolescent role deprivation and early marriage, age at initiation of dating was part of the most strongly supported hypothesis. Moss and Gingles (1959) found that more of their early marriage group had been dating when initially tested as students. Inselberg's (1961) early married group had also been about one year younger at the time of first dating.

2. *The earlier a girl begins to go steady, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Evidence for this proposition was also found in research by Burchinal (1959e), Moss and Gingles (1959), and Inselberg (1961). The early-married girls in Inselberg's study had started going steady one and one-half years before the girls in the control group.

3. *The earlier a girl becomes engaged, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

This hypothesis was taken from research by Moss and Gingles (1959). More "early marrieds" were engaged when initially tested as students.

4. *The more steady boyfriends a girl has in high school, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

It appears that Burchinal is the only researcher to have studied this variable and his findings support it (1959e).

5. *The more times a girl is "in love" with steady dates, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Again Burchinal is the only researcher to have studied this variable and his findings support it (1959e).

6. *The more dates a girl has compared to others her age, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal also recognized this as a characteristic contributing to the occurrence of early marriage (1959e).

7. *If a girl becomes premaritally pregnant at an early age, it is more likely early marriage will occur.*

Inselberg (1961) reports that 43 percent of the early-married girls were premaritally pregnant; 10 percent of the control girls were premaritally pregnant. She points out that the occurrence of premarital pregnancy cannot be assumed to mean that the girls necessarily had more premarital intercourse than a girl who is not premaritally pregnant.

Other studies also support a high rate of premarital pregnancy among early marriages. Bur-

chinal (1959e) found that 40 percent of his subjects who were married in high school were premaritally pregnant. In another study of 740 Iowa girls married in 1958, Burchinal (1960) reports that 57 percent were premaritally pregnant when only one of the partners was in high school; 87 percent were premaritally pregnant when both partners were in high school.

In the Moss and Gingles study (1959), 31 percent of the early marrieds were premaritally pregnant. Landis and Landis (1958) report that when marriages involve two high school students, 44 to 56 percent involve premarital pregnancy.

However, the above figures may be distorted because of unwillingness to admit to premarital pregnancy. This factor was overcome by Lowrie (1965) by using record linkage for marriage and birth. He found that 71 percent of the premaritally pregnant brides were 18 years and under. Sixty-five percent of the premarital pregnancies involved grooms 20 years and under.

8. *The less socially adjusted a girl is, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Moss and Gingles (1959) hypothesized that girls who marry early tend to be less well-adjusted than their schoolmates. There was no significant difference, however, in the social adjustment of the early married and control groups. Martinson's study (1955) of ego deficiency as a factor contributing to a person's tendency to marry indicated that women who had remained single more than four years after high school showed greater degrees of social adjustment than women who had married within four years of high school graduation.

Havighurst's research (1962) also indicated a tendency for those with poor social adjustment to marry early. Girls marrying at 17 and less had lower scores in social leadership and higher aggression scores. By 18-19 years, however, there was no difference in social adjustment between those married and those not married.

9. *The less emotionally adjusted a girl is, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Moss and Gingles (1959) found significant differences between the early married and the control group on the emotionality scale of the Minnesota Personality Scale. Martinson (1955) found greater personal adjustment in those girls who had not married within four years of graduation. In River City, Havighurst (1962) found a tendency for boys with poor social adjustment to marry early. Boys married at 17 or less had strong maladjustment scores. Boys married at 18

and 19 years of age had lower leadership scores and higher aggression scores.

11. *The less emotionally adjusted a boy is, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Martinson (1959) lends some support to this proposition.

12. *The more satisfaction a girl anticipates from marriage, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

In interviewing their subjects, Moss and Gingles (1959) found that the girls who married early felt that marriage was their goal in life. They felt that marriage offered more satisfactions than their previous family situation

13. *The more optimistic a girl's expectations and attitudes toward marriage, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Indirect support for this proposition is found in several studies. Herrmann (1965) found that teenagers are especially optimistic about acquiring durable goods in marriage. This can perhaps be considered an example of optimism about other factors involved in marriage also. Burchinal (1959b) found that when the 60 couples he studied were married, 23 percent of the husbands had had no steady job, 30 percent were unskilled workers, and the rest were in the service or in jobs requiring some training. These findings support an attitude of optimism over financial support of the couple.

Burchinal (1959d) also cites high rates of cross-religious marriages among those married under 16 years of age as compared to those married later as evidence of willingness to assume a hazardous set of conditions for marital success. For the years 1953-57, in Iowa, 52 percent of the Catholic brides under 16 married Catholic grooms; 83 percent of the Catholic brides 21-22 years of age married Catholic grooms.

Inselberg (1961) also found more interreligious and affiliated-unaffiliated marriages among early-married subjects.

Burchinal (1965:246) points out in addition that idealized images of marriage, though perhaps intensified and more unrealistic among adolescents, are held by many young adults as well. The higher rates of disillusionment, unhappiness, separation, and divorce among young than among other marriages . . . , however, probably reflect the greater degree of prevalence of glamorized and naive views of marriage among adolescents who marry at younger ages.

14. *The greater a girl's dissatisfaction with parental relations, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Moss and Gingles (1959) found differences

between girls marrying before 19 years of age and their unmarried schoolmates by using the family relations scale of the Minnesota Personality Scale. Girls who married early tended to have less satisfying relations with their families. Martinson (1955, 1959) found significantly lower mean scores on family relationships and home adjustment for early married girls. The relationship for boys was considerably less distinct and statistically unreliable.

In Inselberg's research (1961) wives in the experimental group had greater disagreement with parents before marriage and both husbands and wives in this group had less attachment to their fathers.

Burchinal's (1959e) findings do not support this proposition but he offers the explanation that since the girls were questioned after being married some time, parental relations had perhaps improved since the marriage. Although most of the girls said their parents had objected to the marriage, they added that their parents generally accepted it at the time of Burchinal's study.

15. *The less happy the parents of the girl are, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Support for this proposition is found in Lowrie's research (1965). Brides married at 16 and 17 reported their parents to have relatively less marital happiness, compared to reports of older brides. This relationship was true whether the bride was premaritally pregnant or not. For pregnant brides over 17 years, Lowrie also noted relatively more unhappily married parents, but for nonpregnant brides over 17, the proportion of happily married parents increased.

Inselberg (1961) found no difference in the proportion of happily married parents (as reported by the young couple when married) between the experimental and control groups.

16. *When only one or no parent is present in the home of the boy or girl, it is more likely early marriage will occur.*

Proposition 16 is mainly supported by Havighurst's research in River City (1962). Fifty-seven percent of the children marrying early were from homes where both parents were living together; 72 percent of those who had not married early were from such homes. Inselberg (1961) found that the husbands in her experimental group were less likely to be from "intact" families.

However, Burchinal (1959e) and DeLissovoy and Hitchcock (1965) report their early married groups to be no more likely to come from a fam-

ily where one or both parent is missing, compared to later married groups.

17. *The less interest or ability a boy or girl has in pursuing formal education, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

For girls, proposition 17 receives support from research by Moss and Gingles (1959), Burchinal (1960), DeLissovoy and Hitchcock (1965), and Havighurst (1962). Havighurst indicates that many of the girls who married early in River City had reached a "dead end" in school. Marriage appeared to these girls to be an attractive alternative course. Burchinal (1960) and Havighurst (1962) found the relationship true for boys also.

18. *The more a girl dates older men, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal's study (1959e) showed that those girls who married before graduation had more frequently dated older men.

19. *The lower the education level of a girl's parents, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal (1959e) found that the educational levels of the mothers and fathers of the early married girls were lower than those of the control group. DeLissovoy and Hitchcock (1965) did not find this difference in their sample.

20. *The lower the occupational status of a girl's parents, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal (1959e) found this relationship to be true but again DeLissovoy and Hitchcock (1965) did not find it.

21. *The lower the social class of a boy's or girl's parents, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Havighurst (1962) reported that age at marriage for girls decreased as social class decreased. For boys, only boys in the upper quartile seemed to marry later.

22. *The lower the occupational status of a boy, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal and Chancellor (1963) report that the median age for brides at marriage to low status grooms was 19.1 years. The median age of brides at marriage to high status grooms was 20.6 years. The same general pattern was observed for the age of the groom at marriage to brides of different status.

23. *The less religious affiliation a boy or girl has, the more likely early marriage will occur.*

Burchinal and Chancellor (1963) found that age at marriage varied with the bride's and

groom's religious affiliations. In a study of all marriages of whites in Iowa during the years 1953-57, they found that the median age of the Catholic brides at marriage was 20.6 years. The median age of unaffiliated Protestant brides at marriage was 19.2 years. The pattern of religious affiliation and age at marriage for grooms was less clear but of the same general pattern. Havighurst (1962) also found a strong tendency for early marrying youth to have little contact with the church.

FROM EMPIRICAL TO GENERAL PROPOSITIONS

The previous propositions have been stated in much the same terms as when the variables were operationalized for research purposes. It is obvious that many of the propositions are closely related and, in some cases, even repetitious. The next task, then, is to subsume the specific propositions under more general explanatory propositions.

Propositions 1 through 7 have one common element—they all describe the premarriage behavior of a person in terms of relations with the other sex. These seven propositions could be combined in one statement regarding the length and intensity of heterosexual involvement at an early age.

Thus the first 7 propositions could be stated as Theoretical Proposition I:

Within a social class, the greater the heterosexual involvement at an early age, the more likely early marriage will occur.

There is considerable empirical and theoretical support for this more general proposition as seen in the contributing propositions. It probably is the most strongly supported of any proposition in this paper because the variables involved are more clearly operationalized than those in the following propositions.

To the authors' knowledge, only the first empirical proposition is supported by data for males. Thus the validity of most of the contributing propositions, and therefore the validity of the theoretical proposition, has not been tested on a male sample. However, it probably would hold true for men.

Propositions 8, 9, 10—anticipated satisfactions from marriage, optimistic expectations and attitudes, and dissatisfaction with parental relations—generally indicate a discrepancy in satisfactions anticipated from marriage roles and satisfactions received from existing roles. Burchinal (1959e) has directed some research to identifying factors related to feelings of role deprivation which would cause a person to reject adolescent role behavior. In the research design,

Burchinal measured dissatisfactions with parental relations, personality characteristics, and heterosexual involvement. Only the latter variable was found to be related to age at marriage.

Heterosexual involvement has here been separated from the concept of role deprivation, although it is recognized as a contributing variable. It has been separated and stated as Theoretical Proposition I to indicate that although heterosexual involvement may cause dissatisfaction with adolescent roles, it also functions independently. As a separate proposition, heterosexual involvement may explain the large number of forced marriages among high school students.

In relation to Burchinal's null findings on dissatisfaction with parental relations, he offers an explanation, stated under proposition 10, to indicate that his research design might have been at fault. And it should be noted that Moss and Gingles (1959) and Inselberg (1961) do offer support for the relationship.

In addition, indirect support for dissatisfaction with parental relations might be gleaned from specific propositions 11 and 12—less happy parents and "broken" homes. The necessary inference is that a young person cannot derive adequate satisfactions from an "unhappy" or "broken" family. Obviously, this is not the case in all families but it is likely that these determinants could contribute to dissatisfaction with an existing family situation.

Lack of interest or ability in formal education, as indicated in specific proposition 13, could certainly contribute to dissatisfaction with adolescent role behavior which requires attendance at school and emphasizes scholastic achievement.

Burchinal's finding (1959e) that early married girls date older men more often may be an indicator of dissatisfaction with adolescent role behavior in that these girls do not enjoy participating in the usual adolescent dating activities.

Propositions 8, 9, 10 and 11 may contain a common element of role dissatisfaction. Social and/or emotional maladjustment may be a *reason for* or *result of* dissatisfaction with family, school, or peer group relations. Regardless of the causal relationship, social and/or emotional maladjustment might also be subsumed here under a more general statement about role dissatisfaction.

Thus by direct support and inference, the specific propositions 8 through 18 can be stated as Theoretical Proposition II:

The greater the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from mar-

riage and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles, the more likely early marriage will occur.

Theoretical Proposition II takes into account one type of person recognized as oriented toward early marriage by Moss and Gingles (1959) and Havighurst (1962). Moss and Gingles characterized this person as one who is emotionally insecure and feels pushed toward marriage as an escape from an unhappy environment into something which promises to be better. Havighurst similarly points to the girl who is socially maladjusted in school and doing poorly in school work. He also found two general types of boys who married early; one of these being the boy who is a drop-out, has poor school records, and poor social adjustment in school. But there must be another or other determinant(s) operating in the case of the boy or girl who gets along well with peers and does well in school besides having a "happy" home life and yet is prone to marry early. This type of person was also recognized by both Moss and Gingles and Havighurst.

Perhaps the explanation lies in specific propositions 19, 20, 21, and 22. All these propositions are indicative of the relationship between social class and age at marriage. This is a generally accepted inverse relationship. However, is social class *per se* the important variable or is the "essence" of the relationship contained in some characteristic of social class?

People in or from low social classes are generally involved in low status jobs, which, in turn, require little educational or occupational preparation. Glick (1962:118) reports that:

In general, those husbands whose chosen line of work requires more than an average amount of educational training or manual or supervisory experience, or the accumulation of material resources, are likely to be older at first marriage than other men. . . . Thus, laborers and operatives generally need little training, experience, or resources to enter their types of work and they tend to marry at younger ages than the average.

This means that proposition 13 can be brought into the picture again. Interest or ability to pursue formal education is certainly related to the amount of educational preparation needed to fulfill one's perceived role in the society.

However, Glick also points out that:

The progressively higher median ages at first marriage for persons with 12 or more years of schooling is only partially explainable by the longer amount of time spent in school. Even among those who drop out

of high school, the median age at marriage is well above the usual age for completing 1 to 3 years of high school. . . . There is only about one-half year difference . . . between the median age at marriage for those who quit after high school graduation and those with 1 to 3 years of college, although the latter had been in school about a year and a half more, in the average, than the former. In this situation . . . there is evidence of selectivity in the types of persons who do or do not pursue their schooling until they have completed a particular school level (elementary school, high school, or college).

Thus, felt need for education and training may be a major "relevant" component of the social class variable. Closely related to this is the matter of aspirations.

In addition, other aspects of social class may be involved. For instance, the lower social class provides more examples and models of early marriage and fewer sanctions against it. Another consideration comes to light from recent research (Rainwater, 1965) which shows that lower social class people are less likely to think at abstract levels. They are less likely to see patterns of relationships between events or to feel that they have control over their lives. Thus marriage is less likely to be causally associated in their thinking with the positions the husband will hold, or the income the family will receive. This line of thought brings propositions 8 and 9—anticipated satisfactions from marriage and optimistic expectations and attitudes—into the picture again.

With all of these probably relevant components of the social class variable, perhaps one or more of these components may be more explanatory of the tendency toward early marriage than social class as such. However, empirical support for any one component is negligible and since we are committed to basing the theoretical propositions upon empirical research so far as possible, social class is accepted as the relevant variable for the time being. Hopefully, future research will offer more insight into the component dimensions of this property. So with the understanding that several components may be active within the social class variable, propositions 19, 20, 21, and 22 will yield Theoretical Proposition III:

The lower the social class, the more likely early marriage will occur.

The final proposition on the relationship of religious affiliation to age at marriage has only slight empirical support. It may be another manifestation of social class. Considering the amount of support available, it appears that this variable must wait for more conclusive evidence

or a revealing of its relationship to other variables before it can be included in this formulation.

DEVELOPMENT OF DERIVED THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Zetterberg (1965) has proposed the derivation of additional propositions by combining elements from the original set. The product seems likely to be worth the effort required; however, *no assumption of the truth of propositions derived in this manner is made*. The derived propositions are of the same nature as other hypotheses whose truth or falsity is yet to be established. By combining the independent variables in Theoretical Propositions I and II, Derived Theoretical Proposition 1 is obtained:

Within a social class, the greater the heterosexual involvement at an early age, the more likely the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage at an early age and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles will be great (and vice versa).

It has been suggested by some researchers that heterosexual involvement at an early age causes frustration with adolescent behavior and a desire to marry so sexual gratification need not be postponed. This relationship is suggested by Derived Proposition 1. However, stimulus to heterosexual involvement at an early age is not the only factor which can lead to a discrepancy in satisfactions, as pointed out before. The cause might be parental relations, social adjustment, or scholastic aspirations.

Probably the reverse is also true—that those who see a good deal to be gained in early marriage are more likely to become heavily heterosexually involved.

Theoretical Propositions I and III yield Derived Theoretical Proposition 2:

The lower the social class, the more likely the heterosexual involvement at an early age.

Although the initiation of heterosexual interaction seems to occur at earlier ages among higher than lower socioeconomic groups, children from the lower groups seem to move more rapidly through courtship to marriage. Thus this proposition suggests that the intensity of involvement at a young age is greatest in the lower classes. Burchinal (1959e) reports that girls who married early were of lower socioeconomic status, had "gone steady" at an earlier age with more boyfriends, had been in "love" with more dates, and dated more often than girls of the same age who had not married early.

Theoretical Propositions II and III yield Derived Theoretical Proposition 3:

The lower the social class, the more likely the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage at an early age and satisfactions received from existing roles will be great.

There is much support for Derived Proposition 3. Lower class children are less likely to expect to enter occupations requiring higher education and extended training. They are less likely to expect to own expensive homes or other goods and services in a high standard of living. They experience less social disapproval from their reference groups including their families. If the young husband cannot find steady employment, there is less stigma to living on welfare payments or doubling up with parents. We consider social class as a set of qualities of the individual, as well as a position in the hierarchy of status.

Derived Proposition 3 relates Original II to Original III in a very meaningful way in the sense that part of the variation in the discrepancy in roles which is the determinant in Original II can be explained by social class. We feel, therefore, that Derived 3 adds appreciably to the internal consistency of the formulation.

CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

To this point attention has centered on determinants of early marriage. We are not prepared to deal as elaborately with consequences, but there is support for three propositions. There is considerable support, much of it from census data (Burchinal, 1965) that early marriage results in lower social class placement. The principal mechanism is curtailed formal education with resultant occupational placement in unskilled, semi-skilled and clerical occupations. In this instance one of the determinants, social class, is also one of the consequences.

Reference has already been made to a second consequence, high divorce, desertion and separation rates for early marriage. Although some of the higher rates may be associated with related variables, such as the premarital pregnancy rate, the extreme differences in divorce rates by age of spouse are impressive (Glick, 1962; Parke and Glick, 1967).

Quite closely related to the higher dissolution rates are the findings that negative affect is more characteristic of early marriages (Burchinal, 1959b; Glick, 1962; Inselberg, 1961).

In more formal language, these Propositions can be stated as:

IV: The earlier the marriage, the more likely

the lower social class placement of the couple.

V: The earlier the marriage, the more likely it is to be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.

VI: The earlier the marriage, the more likely it is to be characterized by negative affect.

Combining the consequences in these propositions, the Derived Propositions are obtained:

4: The lower the social class placement of the couple, the more likely the marriage will be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.

5: The lower the social class placement of the couple, the more likely the marriage will be characterized by negative affect.

6: Marriages characterized by negative affect are more likely to be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.

These derived theoretical propositions are all generally accepted as true. They suggest few new ideas but help to illustrate the internal consistency of the theoretical statements. The original and derived theoretical propositions are summarized in Table I.

RELATION TO GENERAL THEORY

The reader familiar with exchange theory will have recognized Theoretical Proposition II as a substantively oriented profit and loss statement. "The greater the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles, the more likely early marriage will occur."

Homans (1961) and Thibaut and Kelley (1959) have formulated propositions which propose that action is determined by the maximization of profit. That is, a course of action will be continued unless/until an alternative course of action will provide a greater profit. Such formulations are stated in positive terms in that even though no alternative is very desirable, one is always more desirable than the others.

In this formulation two classes of determinants can be distinguished—those in which marriage promises more satisfactions than the single state and those in which it is the least undesirable of two or more unattractive alternatives. For girls who see marriage as their main goal in life, it is intrinsically a more profitable choice than being single, assuming some normative assumptions are met such as mutual attraction between the couple and the probability that the man can support a wife and children. These girls see no reason to delay marriage when these

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL AND DERIVED THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Determinants	
Original I:	Within a social class, the greater the heterosexual involvement at an early age, the more likely early marriage will occur.
Original II:	The greater the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles, the more likely early marriage will occur.
Original III:	The lower the social class, the more likely early marriage will occur.
Derived 1:	Within a social class the greater the heterosexual involvement at an early age, the more likely the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage at an early age and satisfactions received from existing roles will be great.
Derived 2:	The lower the social class, the more likely the heterosexual involvement at an early age.
Derived 3:	The lower the social class, the more likely the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage at an early age and satisfactions received from existing roles will be great.
Consequences	
Original IV:	The earlier the marriage, the more likely the lower social class placement of the couple.
Original V:	The earlier the marriage, the more likely it is to be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.
Original VI:	The earlier the marriage, the more likely it is to be characterized by negative affect.
Derived 4:	The lower the social class placement of the couple, the more likely the marriage will be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.
Derived 5:	The lower the social class placement of the couple, the more likely the marriage will be characterized by negative affect.
Derived 6:	Marriages characterized by negative affect are more likely to be dissolved by voluntary action of the couple.

conditions are met—in fact, they are eager to consummate it. This is more likely to be true in the lower social class because of lower material expectations and less education and training required for men. Given these values, girls are more likely to move faster and further into dating and into intimate physical relationships. However, the reverse is true, too, that those who become sexually stimulated are likely to place a higher value on marriage.

Among those who are premaritally pregnant, marriage offers the least undesirable of several alternatives and is the direct motivation for a large proportion of marriages of very young couples.

In both instances, the decision is to modify the exchange with parents, the potential spouse, with the school (if one or both are enrolled), and with an employer (if the boy is not employed). Both spouses will decrease their exchanges with parents, increase them with each other, likely decrease the exchange with the educational system and increase it with the economic system. As they establish a new household, they will enter into exchanges with a landlord, grocer, neighbors and others. Whether these alternations in exchange will result in an increased profit cannot be predicted with certainty, but an *anticipated* increase is likely to result in a change from single to married status.

This theoretical formulation has not been tested against data from nonwestern societies, and such tests may well lead to revisions and extensions. Goode (1963) does offer support for the relationship of social class and age at marriage in Syria and India. In Syria, the higher classes marry at an older age. In Sub-Sahara Africa, however, the children of wealthy and noble families marry the earliest. But Goode points out that this situation is changing now with increased emphasis on education. This may well indicate that what we termed the relevant dimensions of social class may prove the more universal properties related to age at marriage. However, before these generalizations are extended to include other societies, more empirical evidence is needed from other societies on the presence and interrelationships of variables such as used in this formulation.

Finally, this attempt at propositional formulation stimulates still another issue. Two different groups of adolescents are marrying early; one is forced into marriage by a premarital pregnancy, the other as a voluntary decision chooses married over single status. Do the propositions concerning the determinants and consequences of early marriage apply equally to the two groups? Research to date may not have sufficiently differentiated these two groups which may explain contradictory and/or inconclusive relationships between variables.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Note has been made already of several gaps which exist in current knowledge on early marriage. For instance, the social class variable needs further investigation. The concepts of anticipated and received role satisfactions proved helpful in summarizing many diverse ordinary propositions. However, these abstract concepts now need to be operationalized and employed

in empirical research to discover whether or not they best "fit" reality.

Another gap in current knowledge shown by the process of deriving ordinary propositions is research involving males. In general, this formulation assumes that the same variables are related in the same manner to explain early marriage of both sexes. This assumption needs specific proof.

The necessity for further research is indicated by the fact that all of these propositions are two-variate statements. Zetterberg (1965:65) states that such propositions are "... acceptable as intermediate steps in theory construction even if they do not tell the whole story. Once formulated they lend themselves to amendments." Most of the available research on early marriage has been involved with two-variate propositions and little has been concerned with all of the variables included here. Research involving the variables of heterosexual involvement, role satisfactions, and social class might indicate the necessity of multivariate propositions such as: "If satisfactions anticipated from marriage exceed satisfactions from existing roles and if early marriage is sanctioned by the social group, then early marriage is more likely to occur."

Finally, an inspection of the level of generality of Theoretical Propositions I, II, and III discloses that Proposition II is framed at a considerably higher level of generality. *In fact*, Propositions I and III can be explained by II, so that the reason that early marriage is more common among lower class youth is that the discrepancy of satisfactions in favor of marriage is greater there. Likewise for those with a greater heterosexual involvement at an early age, the discrepancy in favor of marriage is more likely to be found. Therefore, I and III are special instances of II. This permits the additional question, what are the *other* social and perhaps psychological propositions which would help to specify Proposition II (besides lower social class and early, heavy heterosexual involvement)? Early, well-paid employment of the male member of the pair might be a possibility. To the best of our knowledge this has not been researched. Exploitation of youth by parents through unpaid family work might be another. Further consideration would likely result in additional lower level propositions appropriate for empirical testing.

This propositional formulation of early marriage has, to a degree, succeeded in systematizing the substantive area of family research. It also emphasizes that more work must be done before the phenomena is explained.

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