

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MARITAL DESERTION  
IN DUBLIN

An Exploratory Study

KATHLEEN O'HIGGINS

*BROADSHEET No. 9*

*MAY, 1974*

# MARITAL DESERTION IN DUBLIN

## An Exploratory Study

*Copies of this paper may be obtained from The Economic and Social Research Institute, 4,  
(Limited Company No. 18269), Registered Office: Burlington Road, Dublin 4*

**Price IR£5.00**

*(Special rate for students IR£2.50)*

Kathleen O'Higgins is an Assistant Research Officer at The Economic and Social Research Institute. The paper has been accepted for publication by the Institute, which is not responsible for either the content or the views expressed therein.

*MARITAL DESERTION*  
*IN DUBLIN*

An Exploratory Study

KATHLEEN O'HIGGINS

©THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE, DUBLIN, 1974.

ISBN 0 901809 76 4

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	i
SECTION I	
Methodology and Field Techniques	11
The Interview	18
SECTION II	
Before Marriage	21
SECTION III	
During Marriage	50
SECTION IV	
After Desertion	96
SECTION V	
Marriage Breakdown and the Law in Ireland	123
Divorce	127
Future Research	128
SECTION VI	
Conclusions	131
APPENDIX A—Tables 2-19	141
APPENDIX B—Questionnaire and Letter.	155

### *Addendum*

At the time this study was going to press the Nineteenth Interim Report of the Committee on Court Practice and Procedure, dealing specifically with desertion and maintenance, was published. It is interesting to note that although this author was not called upon to give evidence to the Committee, a number of the recommendations are similar. It is understandable, however, that because of the shortness of the report the causes of desertion and marital breakdown are inclined to be over-simplified. The recommendations had also to be limited to within the terms of reference of the report. It is to be hoped that prevention will be a major consideration in the preparation for changes in family law in Ireland by Mr Cooney (Minister for Justice). Ignoring this and dealing only with desertion and broken marriages *per se* is comparable to treating typhoid while ignoring the polluted water supply from which it comes.

### *Acknowledgements*

The author wishes to acknowledge assistance received from several sources during the preparation of this study. In particular, Professor Bertram Hutchinson of the Institute under whose guidance the study was undertaken and carried out and who was always available for comment and assistance; Mrs Bernadette O'Sullivan, psychologist with the Eastern Health Board, with whom the author had the initial discussion from which the idea of a study of this particular nature evolved; Mr Fred Donohoe of the Eastern Health Board who was very helpful at the early stages of the project; the social workers of the ISPC and other voluntary organisations mentioned in the study, together with the priests, doctors and others who provided contacts with deserted wives and without whose help it would have been impossible to get the project under way. The author would also like to thank Dr R. C. Geary and Professor Earl Davis of the Institute for their particularly detailed and helpful comments on earlier drafts. A number of points were also raised by the Referee. Finally, the author is deeply indebted to her many colleagues at the Institute on the research (particularly the social) and administrative sides for their numerous suggestions and assistance during the preparation of the report.

## Introduction

THE study which follows is an attempt to examine a social problem, that of marital desertion, never previously considered in Ireland in this particular way. It has as its objectives (i) the study of the marital breakdown situation which led some men to choose this solution, and (ii) the aetiology of breakdown. The difficulties in fully achieving these objectives were many and we would agree with the lawyer, Eckelaar, that "... examination of sociological material does not provide evidence of causes of marital breakdown. Sociologists and psychiatrists can do no more than provide information about the kinds of factors which are commonly associated with separation and divorce."<sup>1</sup> This study is of an exploratory nature. It is not based on a representative sample of deserted wives simply because no sampling frame was available. No register or record exists of all desertions in Ireland. A minimum number—namely, those on a man's tested statutory benefit from the Department of Social Welfare, can be given for the country as a whole, and that is in the region of 2,900. From the 1971 Census of Population the number of married men in the country was 514,927 and the number of married women was 523,075—a difference of 8,148. This figure seems surprisingly small when it is considered that it has to take account of husbands temporarily absent from the country. As it is derived from the difference between two large totals (approximately half-a-million each) one must be statistically distrustful of the difference between two large magnitudes. Still some interest attaches to the differences in previous Census years—1966—11,254; 1961—14,625; 1951—15,286; 1946—26,386. It will be seen that the difference was much greater in previous years so that the present small total may be associated with the decline

<sup>1</sup>John Eckelaar, *Family Security and Family Breakdown*, London, Penguin Books, 1971, p. 36.



in emigration. Not all deserting husbands leave the country, of course, but from the evidence of social workers and the deserted wives themselves it seems that a great many do. In trying to find some idea of the magnitude of the problem of desertion then, this Census figure of 8,148 must be taken into consideration. In all probability the number of deserted wives is somewhere between three and eight thousand.

The problem of the lack of a sampling frame will be discussed more fully in the section on methodology and field techniques. The tentative nature of this report must always be borne in mind by the reader and no definitive solution to the problem is propounded. None of the conclusions can be taken as applying to the population of deserted wives in general in Dublin. They are true for those forty deserted wives interviewed. Nevertheless, this is the first step into the area of the study of marital breakdown in Ireland. It is aimed at (i) encouraging further study, (ii) pointing out the difficulties of research in this area, and (iii) emphasising the existence of a serious social problem.

Desertion is usually a male phenomenon. This might be explained by the stronger ties between mothers and their children than between fathers and their children; and indeed in Ireland the traditional mother/child attachment is well-known and the subject of much discussion.<sup>2</sup> In other countries, too, males are more likely to desert than females. Women also desert, however, and in our initial discussions on the subject with colleagues and social workers it would appear that in Ireland desertion by women is on the increase. There are few statistics available on this, perhaps because deserted husbands have less need of applying to statutory bodies for help. George and Wilding<sup>3</sup> found in their study of motherless families in Britain that a desire for independence was the motivation of the majority of the women who left their husbands, and not because

<sup>2</sup>See A. J. Humphreys: *New Dubliners*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966 and C. Arensberg and S. Kimball: *Family and Community in Ireland*, Harvard University Press, 1940.

<sup>3</sup>V. George and P. Wilding: *Motherless Families*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

of say, cruelty or adultery. But desertion remains a typically male phenomenon and it was for this reason that our study was confined to deserted wives. The reneging by the husband on his obligations to support his wife and children is the kernel of a typical case of desertion. This might even involve the husband remaining in the home while refusing to support his family, or leaving without explanation or support for a few months at a time. However, in the case of the respondents in this study, all but one of the husbands had left for some considerable time and seemed unlikely to return.

Desertion in Ireland differs from desertion in other countries in one very important aspect. Divorce is not permitted by the Irish Constitution, so desertion cannot be used as a ground for divorce—a deserted wife remains a deserted wife. Up to early 1973 there was one exception to this as far as the State was concerned. Where a woman was deserted by her husband and divorced by him in another country, she was not eligible for the benefit received by a deserted wife, and was, in the eyes of the law and of the Department of Social Welfare, no longer married. Although the then Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, Mr Brennan, in November 1971 said that this matter was under discussion, the Department of Social Welfare, Deserted Wife's Allowance Section, confirmed by telephone on 13 October 1972 that there had been no change in this ruling.<sup>4</sup> There are, apparently, legal principles involved and the Department, it is appreciated, must work within the law. As it would not be possible for the husband to obtain a dissolution of his marriage in this country, what exactly then are the legal principles involved? Our courts will recognise a foreign divorce decree if the parties to the marriage are domiciled in that foreign country. In these matters, a court bases its jurisdiction on domicile. Domicile is a lawyer's concept, and, basically means where a person has his permanent home. If the parties are not domiciled, but merely resident, in the foreign country, the divorce is not recognised. However, a married

<sup>4</sup>See: Parliamentary reply of the Minister for Labour and Social Welfare. November, 1971: 257 Dail Debates, Col. 31.

woman takes her husband's domicile just as she takes his name. (She has a domicile of dependency.) She cannot, at law, have a domicile of her own. If the husband deserts to England, the law presumes that both parties are living there, whereas in fact she has been deserted and is still living in Dublin. On this legal basis, a deserted wife might have lost her allowance. Domicile "legally" distorts the real position. It is inaccurate for the law to say that the wife is living with her husband in England, yet, legally this is the correct position. This whole legal exercise is based on fiction. The Attorney General ruled in April 1973, however, that divorce *per se* does not mean that a woman is disqualified from receiving a deserted wife's allowance.

To speak of desertion we must first have a marriage. In Ireland marriage was traditionally underpinned by a whole series of social and economic considerations, for example, procreation, labour, home provision, inheritance, neighbourhood and wider kin relationships. Thomas, in his study of Catholic couples in the Chicago Archdiocese in 1949, (and it seems relevant to Irish Catholics of that time also) observes—  
"Among Catholic couples at least, many factors leading to unhappiness and dissatisfaction have little relationship to the complete breakdown of marriage. This is to say many areas of conflict and tension are never thought of in terms of separation or divorce. Although . . . the margin of tolerance may shift, the average couple, apparently, accepts a considerable amount of frustration as a necessary concomitant of the marriage state."<sup>5</sup>  
Marriage was held to be instituted by God and so a sacred and holy institution. However, this traditional idea of marriage no longer applies to anything like the same extent—especially in urban society, owing to economic, industrial and philosophic change. Even in the ecclesiastical sense, the notion of psychological consummation of marriage is being debated and some churchmen hold its presence as being as important and necessary in a marriage as physical consummation. The emphasis is

<sup>5</sup>John L. Thomas: "Catholic Family Disorganisation", in E. W. Burgess and D. J. Bogue (eds.). *Contributions to Urban Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 540.

placed on marriage as a *personal* relationship between people—romantic love and personal fulfilment being the important components. Such a relationship without social underpinning may be unstable and if it does not work out there are no supports for it, as the traditional setting provided. This results in more frequent breakdown, since divorce is not allowed in Ireland the only possible legal step is separation if the situation becomes intolerable. This does not confer the freedom to remarry if desired. Desertion is one means of separation. The marriage is ended socially, if not legally, by desertion. It does not confer the right of remarriage either; but because the deserter usually goes to an area where he is unknown, remarriage is easier though legally bigamous. Desire to remarry may not necessarily be a factor in breakdowns, but among those who desert in Ireland, it may be more likely to be so since divorce is not permitted, and a number of our subjects were deserted for this purpose.

Kephart and Monahan examined desertion and divorce as related to religious background in Philadelphia. From statistics compiled from records of the Philadelphia Municipal Court, they found that "in white desertion and non-support cases which came to court, the Catholic group, with reference to their proportion, is over-represented by nearly forty per cent."<sup>6</sup> Ireland (Republic of) having a mainly Catholic population, is probably more desertion prone than other countries if Kephart and Monahan's findings can be related to all Catholic populations. On the other hand, if a legal (*a mensa et toro*) or mutual separation (agreement by both parties without a court appearance) is obtained, the conditions of support and visits to children will be legally laid down. These may not necessarily be adhered to permanently but at least an effort is made to make the best compromise at the time. Equally, desertion may be a flight from an intolerable situation, but again because a deserter will usually go to an area where he is unknown it is more likely that he wishes to remarry.

<sup>6</sup>William M. Kephart and Thomas P. Monahan: "Divorce and Desertion by Religious and Mixed Religious Groups", *American Journal of Sociology*, March, 1954, p. 462.

Marriage being a dynamic relationship is subject to stresses like any human institution; desertion is a solution taken by some to solve the problems they have encountered by reason of entering this relationship—problems they feel they cannot handle and from which they must escape. They choose to end their relationship, sometimes temporarily, sometimes without consciously doing so and sometimes deliberately, unable to find any other way, or seeing this way as the easiest. Dominion, a psychiatrist and marriage guidance counsellor, referring to the time prior to a separation, whether for divorce or desertion, writes: "In the presence of so much frustration and suffering the inevitable depression that accompanies them may reach such proportions that desperate action follows."<sup>7</sup>

Desertions are not confined to the income groups dependent on statutory benefits. Studies on the occupational distribution of desertion have shown (notably Kephart's study of the occupational levels of deserters in Philadelphia)<sup>8</sup> that rates are highest among unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. From our own investigations, supported by interviews of middle-class women and by information from intermediaries about requests for cooperation made to possible respondents, it was shown that in Dublin a number of desertions occur in middle and upper income groups. Because of the difficulty of contacting the women, who are not registered with any agency and, if traceable at all, are only so through friends or colleagues, there is no way of measuring the over-all desertion rate. Estimates will always remain very crude.

The first evidence of the intention of the Government in Ireland to make special provision for the deserted wife is to be found in the Third Programme for Economic and Social Expansion, 1969-72, laid by the Government before each house of the Oireachtas in March 1969.<sup>9</sup> The result of this was the

<sup>7</sup>J. Dominion: *Marital Breakdown*, London: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup>W. Kephart: "Occupational Level and Marital Disruption", *American Sociological Review*, August 1955, Vol. 20, No. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Ireland: *Third Programme, Economic and Social Development 1969-72*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1969.

introduction in October 1970 of a special pension for the deserted wife in certain circumstances, payable by the Department of Social Welfare. Deserted wives had previously been dealt with by the Home Assistance Section of the old Health Authority system, “. . . wives, including those with families, who are unsupported because their husbands have left them or are in prison, form a substantial group whose only source of official assistance is Home Assistance” wrote Ó Cinnéide prior to the implementation of this new scheme.<sup>10</sup>

Of those in receipt of the Deserted Wife's Allowance no separate statistics for Dublin are available since the Department of Social Welfare keeps records only for the country as a whole. Since its inception the Department is receiving applications daily as more women discover that they are entitled to this allowance. There is a means test which restricts the allowance to those with an income not exceeding £494 p.a. This is a graduated allowance but the first £4 of all earnings is ignored. After that the amount received varies from £6.15 per week for a woman with £4 per week or less to 65p per week for a woman earning £9.50 per week.\* Allowances for children are, of course, additional to this pension. In the cases of those wives entitled to this statutory benefit, the Department of Social Welfare took the extremely helpful step of providing a pension book, cashable at a post office, instead of the Home Assistance office. This was a great improvement and was appreciated by most of the deserted wives to whom we spoke. Attendance at an office to collect Home Assistance was a strain on these women since their situation was made public by their having to take a place in a queue and have their business discussed openly with the Home Assistance Officer. The latter have no private offices but work in a room which is waiting-room cum office. Often the attitude of these assistance officers was not very helpful but some of the respondents praised their particular assistance officer for his courtesy and understanding, although the

<sup>10</sup>S. Ó Cinnéide: *A Law for the Poor*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1970, p. 87.

\*These are 1973 figures.

embarrassing circumstances in which the payment was made remained. The present arrangement is satisfactory because of its almost complete privacy. A pension book is provided and the pension can be collected from a post office on each Thursday. A few respondents mentioned that since the pension book had a particular colour and collection day was Thursday, other people who might be in the post office could guess the situation. These women, however, were unable to suggest an alternative or better means of payment.

The Department of Social Welfare also set out the conditions which must be satisfied before a woman can be regarded as deserted wife. They are as follows:

- (a) her husband must have of his own volition left her and must not have lived with her for a continuous period of not less than six months prior to the date of her claim for an allowance.
- (b) she must have made and must continue to make reasonable efforts, within the means available to her, to trace her husband and to effect a reconciliation with him or to compel him, by legal process or otherwise to contribute to the support of her children.
- (c) her husband must not have resumed living with her and must have wilfully refused or neglected to contribute to the support of her and her children, and
- (d) she must be resident in the State at the date of the claim and must also have resided in the State for any period of two years.

The Department qualified its beneficiaries further by the following criteria, which must be met by applicants, defining "deserted wives" in this context. An applicant must:

- (a) for the purpose of the scheme be regarded as having been deserted by her husband.

- (b) be under 70 years of age.
- (c) if she is less than 40 years of age, have at least one qualified child residing with her, and
- (d) satisfy a means test.

We, ourselves, in seeking a definition for the study, felt this definition unsatisfactory because it made no provision for a woman who had been deserted and then divorced by her husband in another State. Again, because of the means test a number of women who were otherwise qualified were excluded. Nor were we alone in our dissatisfaction. Leslie comments as follows: "There is not even any clear definition of what desertion is. The [United States] Bureau of the Census uses the term, i.e. marital separations, and defines these as including couples with legal separations, those living apart with intentions of obtaining a divorce and other persons permanently or temporarily estranged from their spouse because of marital discord."<sup>11</sup> This conglomeration is too comprehensive for the purpose of our present study; that of the Department of Social Welfare is too restricted. We, therefore, defined a deserted wife, quite simply, as a woman not living with her husband and not adequately supported by him—thus including cases where the woman was not receiving the Deserted Wife's Allowance. Divorced women were also included and separated women who were not supported by their husbands. We thought it desirable also to include constructive desertion. Eckelaar describes this: "It is not only the spouse who leaves home who may be in desertion. If he had been forced to leave as a result of a misconduct of the other, then the one who remains behind will be the deserter. The latter is said to be in 'constructive' desertion."<sup>12</sup> This type of desertion is not recognised in Ireland by the Department of

<sup>11</sup>G. Leslie: *The Family in Social Context*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 602/3.

<sup>12</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 115.



Social Welfare and a woman who is forced to leave her husband due to his cruelty or non-maintenance cannot claim a Deserted Wife's allowance. This is, on the financial support side, a more difficult situation for the wife than the husband. The courts do, however, recognise "constructive desertion" and if a wife applies for a maintenance order she may be granted one on this ground. As constructive desertion is a ground for divorce in Britain and elsewhere, one can only speculate on the number of deserting husbands from Ireland who may have used this as justification in seeking their own divorce. Equally, of course, one can speculate on the number of cases where the husband may truly have been driven to desert.

Finally, a type of desertion which exists in a country such as Ireland, where emigration is a fact of life, is the unintentional or gradual desertion. The husband goes to work in another country—at first sends home money, and, if not illiterate, writes an occasional letter. If a good communication bond does not exist between the spouses, this gradually becomes less and less until it stops altogether. Loneliness, lack of female companionship, and weak marital bond all contribute to the husband eventually losing touch. This situation occurred in one only of the cases with which we dealt and is probably more a rural than an urban phenomenon. In nearly all the cases we interviewed some type of breakdown had already occurred—only in one or two cases were the women unaware until the man had left that there was anything wrong. So it could be taken that most of the cases we came across were those of marital breakdown leading to desertion.

## SECTION I

### *Methodology and Field Techniques*

THE nature of the process of desertion makes its operation difficult to study. Deserters do not register anywhere and both the deserter and deserted are very likely to wish to remain anonymous. Consequently, when first considering a study of deserted wives, the problem of contact was the one that was immediately obvious. We consulted the Census as being a possible source of respondents but only *Married*, *Widowed* or *Single* categories of women are mentioned. There is no breakdown of the *Married* classification so that source was closed. How does one find a small group, not specifically catered for in any official register?

At a very early stage it became evident that the ideal of the social researcher, namely, a random sample, was impossible to achieve. Table I gives details of the agencies contacted and the results of the contacts. This Table demonstrates the difficulties encountered by the author in her efforts to find respondents. The number of parish priests contacted (78) and the number of referrals resulting from the contacts (7) is a case in point. The late Archbishop of Dublin, Dr McQuaid, was asked for his cooperation here but replied that he could not see the purpose of such a study. Although there were some very courteous and helpful replies, even where no referrals were possible, the majority of the parish priests did not reply at all. A number of rude refusals, alleging that the investigator was trying to break the trust existing between priest and parishioner, were received. This was in reply to our letter which requested an initial discussion on the area of study and possible means of contacting respondents.\*

\*See Appendix B for copy of this letter.

Table 1: Details of calls made to respondents.

Agencies contacted* (Number of persons involved in brackets)	Total number of referrals	Number consenting to interview	Number of unsuitable interviews	Number of known refusals	Number unable to contact	Number of successful interviews	Total number of calls	Number of calls resulting in successful interviews
Parish Priests (78)	7	1	0	4	2	1	13	3
Curates (4)	9	8	1	1	0	6	23	18
Parish Social Workers (2)	7	6	0	0	1	6	11	11
ISPC	21	19	2	2	0	17	62	50
Private Individuals (6)	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Colleagues (2)	3	3	1	0	0	2	3	2
Doctor from acquaintances	3	3	0	0	0	3	7	7
Dr. Barnardo's	4	2	2	1	1	2	5	2
Child Guidance Clinics (2)	4	4	2	0	0	3	10	8
Newspaper letter	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>101</b>

\*The Home Assistance Office; Department of Social Welfare; Church of Ireland Social Service Council; Samaritans; National Association of Tenants' Organisations; Salvation Army; Free Legal Advice Centres; Action, Information, Motivation (AIM), and another agency which wishes to remain anonymous were also contacted but there were no referrals from these.

Some of the other agencies mentioned at the foot of the table, although by no means opposed to the investigation, after discussion felt that the very particular person-to-person relationship established between the client and, for instance, the Samaritan might be destroyed if the client suspected that her personal affairs might form part of a general survey.

All possible avenues of contact having been exhausted a total of 60 names had been received. The majority interviewed fell into the group dependent on statutory benefits—receiving either a deserted wife's allowance or home assistance. The criteria applied for interviewing were contact and consent (once the respondents fell within the definition limits).

Having discussed the difficulties encountered in planning the study initially, we now come to the difficulties of availing of the assistance of the agencies in actually meeting the respondents. Because of the sensitivity of the subject the most suitable methods of contact had to be particularly carefully planned. In interviewing, generally without a preliminary introduction, there is no means of knowing how the field-worker will be received; and this applies particularly to a study of this kind, in which a prospective respondent might well dissolve into tears on first contact—hardly a foreseeable reaction in a study concerned with a less sensitive topic. It was suggested by the majority of the agencies (using *agency* as the term to describe all respondent sources) that they contact the deserted wives known to them and discuss the study with them and pass on their names to us if they wished to co-operate. The intermediary approach was exactly what we had had in mind and if not mentioned by the agency, we suggested this approach to them as being the correct way to deal with confidential information.

One situation which caused a lot of embarrassment was where a list of names was passed on by an agent who, (it was mistakenly thought) had acted as an intermediary. When the calls were made, however, it became evident that the people on the list knew nothing of the study and were taken aback, if not suspicious. In some cases, when the source was mentioned, he was not known personally and the women approached

wondered how he knew of their situation. As a result, out of six names obtained from this source, only one produced a successful interview. Among this particular group reactions like, "I am all right, I have my parents. Men are all alike," were not uncommon; and one lady became upset and abusive, exclaiming that no one had bothered to help her twenty-three years ago when she needed it and she was not going to co-operate now. Others resisted all attempts to make an appointment for an interview replying to all suggestions that, if the interviewer was in the area, she was "to drop in". No amount of explanation could overcome this reluctance.

The need for absolute confidentiality, again at the interviewing stage, caused some problems. It was this same pre-occupation with the preservation of confidentiality that led to the decision to undertake all the field work myself rather than employ others. The main problem created in the field was that I could not identify myself or state my business except to the respondent herself. This seemed to result in many more callbacks than would normally be necessary in a field survey, an average of 3.38 per interview, as compared with, for instance, 2.63 in *Social Status and Inter-generational Social Mobility in Dublin*.<sup>13</sup>

Coming to the interviews themselves and to the data collected, as Dominion remarks "Research on marriage presents a major challenge because of the multiplicity of sociological and psychological factors involved,"<sup>14</sup> and in this study of marital breakdown which led to desertion, a main difficulty was the necessity of interviewing only one of the partners. "The shifting sands of subjectivity prevent any firm reliance being placed in individual accounts of marriage conflicts";<sup>15</sup> and in most of the cases encountered there was no attempt on the wife's part to seek an explanation for the breakdown in any terms other than that the husband was to

<sup>13</sup>B. Hutchinson: *Social Status and Inter-generational Social Mobility in Dublin*. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, 1969, Paper No. 48.

<sup>14</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup>D. Marsden, *Mothers Alone*, London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969, p. 85.

blame. Nor did the majority of the wives interviewed attempt to assess whether they themselves (though the "innocent" parties) had failed to meet even the minimum expectations of the husband. The few exceptions who had thought about the matter came to the realisation that they were in some way to blame as well as their husbands, though, even of these, not all recognised the possibility that they might have provoked the desertion. How much the general lack of admission of guilt was a face-saving device for the investigator's benefit, or a reaction to an ego-damaging experience, is impossible to say: "Individuals with problems use various stratagems to protect their egos."<sup>16</sup>

Like Marsden we found the relationship between a couple's behaviour in marriage breakdown was "... unusually difficult to explore. Principally, there is the problem of getting reliable information about the actual behaviour. Several studies have clearly demonstrated that couples do not agree about the nature and causes of their disagreements."<sup>17</sup> How much more incomplete is a necessarily one-sided view even though tempered sometimes by time and thought. In contemplating this view we must remember what Slater and Woodside concluded after interviewing both husband and wife, that "no judgements, whatever the apparent facts, can be made on marital conflicts until both sides have been heard."<sup>18</sup> While this may be true, especially in the light of our own experience of the obvious subjectivity of respondents' interpretations of events of the past, the very nature of a study of desertion, a solution chosen by some to marital conflict, implies that one of the partners will not be available for questioning.

However, in the majority of cases, the respondents seemed to welcome the opportunity of telling "their story" and attitudes towards the husband had become hardened. In a few cases the reticence of the respondents presented some difficulty. Heimler

<sup>16</sup>H. T. Christensen (ed.): *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1964, pp. 295/6.

<sup>17</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup>E. Slater & M. Woodside: *Patterns of Marriage*, London: Cassell, 1951.

remarks "There are some experiences in life that cannot be expressed fully in words. The deeper the human emotion, the more difficult it is to find expression for it."<sup>19</sup> One particular contact, referred to earlier, dissolved into tears each time we spoke to her even about being interviewed, so it was decided not to pursue this any further. Others agreed to co-operate but did not elucidate on the information they gave.

The problem of subjectivity cannot be solved using interview techniques alone. In preparing the questionnaire, questions asked were inevitably affected by this. Information which could be obtained without too many attitude or opinion questions was preferred. Because of the small number of respondents and the use of only one interviewer a less formal type of interviewing—open-ended questions and discussions of points for clarity could be used.

There was a great variety in the length of time taken for the interviews. The shortest interview was forty-five minutes and the longest was five hours. Reticence, the presence of children or a parent, or other unavoidable inhibiting factors were responsible for the shorter interviews while a great desire to talk to someone seemed to account for the very long ones. With the exception of three, all the interviews took place in the home of the respondent. One interview took place in a meeting hall, and the other two in the researcher's office.

"In the interview and questionnaire approach, heavy reliance is placed on the subject's *verbal* report for information about the stimuli or experiences to which he is exposed and for knowledge of his behaviour; usually the investigator has not observed the events discussed."<sup>20</sup> This may be regarded as another drawback since some of the respondents had never thought about the kind of things on the questionnaire—the whys and wherefores. A problem arose occasionally of conveying the meaning of questions. Since the majority of the

<sup>19</sup>E. Heimler: *Mental Illness and Social Work*, London: Pelican Books, 1967, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>C. Sellitz, et. al.: *Research Methods in Social Relations*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1965, p. 236.

respondents came from the lower socio-economic group, with the minimum educational level achieved, it is understandable that this situation could arise and here the interviewer was careful to standardise explanations. Few of the women had opinions or suggestions for improving their situation—probably they had never been asked what they would like to see happen.

Although the general run of people were willing to talk, there was some reticence, for instance, on the questions about sex but none of the questions seemed to give offence or cause any inordinate amount of embarrassment. If the interviewer saw a rather fidgety respondent, she explained the reason for asking the question which usually eased the situation, although in most instances did not bring any further information. For the most part, the respondents seemed to enjoy answering the questions.

It is not known how many women were actually approached on our behalf by the various agencies and refused; but those who agreed were certainly co-operative and (although inarticulate in some cases and very articulate in others) were very positive in their reactions to the study. We cannot say why some women agreed and others did not. It could have been how the initial approach was made and by whom. Where social workers from the ISPC, Dr Barnardo's, social service centres, the doctor, and one of the priests had made the initial approach it was a great deal easier to carry out the interviews. Preparation by someone the women trusted seemed to have positively influenced their reactions.

A copy of the printed questionnaire is included in Appendix B. Questions were selected on the basis of factors which are usually associated with prediction of breakdown, i.e. age of marriage, accommodation, drink, sex, number of children, employment patterns.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts:

- (1) *Before Marriage*: dealing with origin, age, social status, place in family, education, interests, influence of parents, courtship pattern, savings and some questions which



made an effort to assess attitudes towards marriage of both parties.

- (2) *During Marriage*: was concerned with age at marriage, religion, accommodation, rent, number of children, whether money, sex, drink or gambling were considered problems, wife's opinion of what went wrong, husband's employment pattern, ability to discuss problems, violence.
- (3) *After Desertion*: included questions of the number of years married before desertion, present source of income, whereabouts of children, court or clinic attendance, support (financial or otherwise) from kin, present accommodation, opportunities for recreation, circumstances of desertion, general views on what they would like to see done.

Four attempts at contact were made in the case of those who had previously agreed to take part. Those contacted by the interviewer without an intermediary, and who refused, were quite definite in their refusal and it was felt that no useful purpose could be served by further attempts to make them change their minds.

Because of the difficulty of finding respondents, pilot interviews were not carried out. The questionnaire therefore was not modified in any way and the format decided upon without testing was used throughout the survey.

One woman whose husband had returned to her was very anxious to be interviewed for some reason, and she was interviewed first. This was useful, for though the information could not be included, it was an indication of how questions sounded in the actual interview setting.

### *The Interview*

The particular type of interview used was a questionnaire with a number of pre-coded questions and a number of open-

ended ones where the respondent could talk if she wished, and was encouraged to do so. As far as possible we tried to make the interview a conversation, feeling this would be more flexible and enable the respondent to more easily describe complex situations. This flexibility in the interview led on one or two occasions to exhausting interviews of as much as five hours duration, as some of the women became so interested in telling their story to someone outside their circle, that it was very difficult to guide the interview. It was felt, however, that a structured interview would not be useful in this sort of study, so as much freedom of expression as possible was allowed, with reference to the questionnaire only to keep the essential information flowing in. Several interviews would probably have yielded a great deal more information had pressure of time not made these impossible. Direct observation as a technique naturally was not possible except perhaps in that part of the enquiry concerned with the deserted wife's subsequent pattern of daily life, but this type of investigation was found time-consuming and difficult to arrange. Nor was it likely to have produced a great deal of extra information relevant to the proposed limits of the study.

So the interviewing techniques was mainly flexible and unstructured, becoming directive in form when the need arose, as, for example, when demographic information was sought.

The respondent was encouraged in the interview to talk about the marital relationship. As mentioned above, there was an unevenness of response here as some women were more articulate or even more willing to talk than others. It was necessary, in some cases, to exercise control to keep the interview on the topic, although the establishment of rapport, particularly at the beginning of the interview, involved a general discussion about the weather, or the children, or the informant's accommodation. Each interview commenced with factual information, in order to give the informant a chance to start off without strain before tackling the more personal and open-ended questions which came later, although experience showed that this was necessary only for the reticent, who were

in the minority. The others had to be directed to the factual questions while they gave quite a lot of the information included in the open-ended questions before being asked.

It is difficult to check consistency in one interview. An initial call was made to introduce the interviewer and the study; and an appointment was made with the respondent to call later at a convenient time. Because of the personal nature of the topic and the variety of reactions to it, it became clear that we were correct in assuming that more control could be exercised in directing the discussion, more evenness and cohesiveness attained, when only one interviewer was involved. Standardisation of questioning also was more easily achieved and many respondents felt reassured. Some respondents asked directly if many people were involved in the study; others asked about confidentiality and they were reassured on this. If the first call made to establish rapport was successful, the study was explained to the respondent as an effort to enquire into their circumstances, the causes of the marital breakdown, and to ask for their suggestions as to how they could be helped. They were informed that the interview would take up to two hours. In the actual interview the respondents were often more worried about delaying the interviewer than in spending their own time, which from our point of view was very satisfactory. Those who had already been contacted by agencies were much more amenable, as was to be expected. The study had been well explained to the respondents, and they had some idea of its content.

Some of the women, particularly those who had contact already with a social worker, seemed to look upon the interview as a therapeutic situation where they might pour out their woes and ask for opinions, advice and so on. Problems which had very little to do with the project were brought up; but we felt that much useful information was gained through listening. An effort was, of course, made to guide the interview. The interviewer did try to avoid giving direct advice or "assuming an advice-giving role" except in cases where factual information could be given, such as agency names to contact.

## SECTION II

### *Before Marriage*

THE number of women interviewed in this study was forty. On each questionnaire respondents were asked where possible for information on their husbands. Thus we have some information on their husbands as well as themselves.

The questionnaire, being divided into the three parts already described, commenced with data on the respondent and her husband before their marriage. The first eleven questions were of a demographic nature, based on the hypotheses that origins, occupations and education might well be the factors important in the study of marital breakdown, and that in the cases of occupations and education, the lowest in each category might be associated with a higher incidence of separation and divorce.<sup>21</sup>

### *Demographic Data*

#### *Origins*

In examining the origins of our subjects and their husbands, we found that of the forty couples, in thirty-five cases both parties were urban born and twenty-eight of them (or slightly more than two-thirds) were both Dublin born. In about one case in twenty both were rural born; and among the remainder (about one case in twelve) the wife was urban, the husband rural. The subjects were all living in the Dublin city area; some had changed their accommodation after the desertion took place but, even allowing for this, there was a wide spread of

<sup>21</sup>See: M. Komarovsky: *Blue Collar Marriage*. New York: Random House, 1962, pp. 344/5/6/7 and K. G. Hillman: *Marital Instability and its Relation to Education, Income and Occupation: An Analysis based on Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family*. Editors: R. F. Winch, R. McGennis, H. R. Barringer, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.

areas across the city with no predominance of subjects from what might usually be regarded as traditional Dublin areas, for example, Summerhill or the Liberties. Of the thirty-eight women born in an urban area nearly all were born in Dublin; the exceptions being one woman who was born in another country but came to Dublin at fourteen years old, and another who was born in a large Irish town, but came to Dublin after marriage. There were thirty-five urban born husbands, twenty-nine of whom were Dubliners (a somewhat smaller proportion); three were born in large Irish towns, and three came from other countries. Of the five rural-born men, two came from other countries and three were natives of Ireland.

The vast majority of our subjects and their husbands were therefore of urban origin. Studies of marital breakdown and divorce (notably in the US and France),<sup>22</sup> suggest that persons from rural backgrounds are slower to divorce than those from urban areas. It may be that the mainly urban origin of our respondents and their husbands was a contributing factor to the breakdown.

At least one-third of the Dublin City and County Borough adult population is not Dublin born,<sup>23</sup> but more than two-thirds of the couples in our study were both born in Dublin and all but two of the women were Dublin born. It is possible to speculate on the reasons for this predominance of Dubliners. It may be accounted for by the fact that, as most of the sample came from the lower socio-economic level, they would be more likely to be Dublin born, since Hutchinson's study found that those born outside Dublin and coming in, appear to be better off than their Dublin born colleagues. It may be, moreover, that rural-born women are less likely to contact welfare agencies, either through ignorance of their existence, or from pride, although we have no evidence supporting this speculation.

<sup>22</sup>See: E. Gaultery: "Les Dissolutions d'Unions en France, étudiées a partie des minutes de jugement". *Population*. juin 1971, pp. 153/4. H. Carter & A. Plateris: "Trends in Divorce and Family Disruption". J. Ross Eshleman (ed.), *Perspectives in Marriage and the Family*, Boston 1969, pp. 724/5 and G. Leslie, *op. cit.*, p. 591.

<sup>23</sup>B. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

There were two inter-racial marriages in the group. In one of these the marriage (judging from the subject's comments) seems to have been entered into with a rebellious attitude, and a desire to be different, at least on the part of the wife. The husband in this case was an African studying in Dublin. A marriage such as this carries a greater risk of breakdown, partly because of the hostility of Irish society to inter-racial marriages in general, which imposes on the couple more adjustments than in marriages without this difference. Racial differences in a couple may mean very dissimilar backgrounds, involving religious and cultural differences. This is not necessarily true of all cultures and societies but would apply in Ireland. Because of these differences, a greater effort is required from each member of the pair if they are to build a good marriage. On this concept of "homogamy" the pioneer research of Burgess and Cottrell in the US<sup>24</sup> and later the work of Goode and Zimmermann, also in the US,<sup>25</sup> has established that inter-racial marriages are less likely to succeed when social differences mean dissimilar background since the more alike the spouses are in background, education, and religion, the less the probability that the marriage will end in divorce.

The other inter-racial marriage in our group took place in England where, although the norms are somewhat similar such a marriage is a much more common occurrence. There did not seem to have been any motive of rebellion in this marriage.

### *Social Status*

Geographical origin was qualified by occupation and education levels. Information was obtained from the subject about her husband's occupation prior to and during marriage; her own occupation before marriage; her father's and her father-in-law's occupations. Using the Hall-Jones scale, we

<sup>24</sup>E. W. Burgess and L. Cottrell: *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*. New York: Prentice Hall International, 1939.

<sup>25</sup>W. J. Goode: *After Divorce*. New York: The Free Press, 1956 and C. Zimmermann: *The Present Crisis*. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956.

translated this information into terms of social status, as follows:

<i>Status Category</i>	<i>Occupation Groups</i>
1. (highest)	Professionally qualified and high administrative.
2.	Managerial and executive.
3.	Inspectional, supervisory and other high-grade non-manual.
4.	Inspectional, supervisory and other lower-grade non-manual.
5.	Skilled manual and routine grades and non-manual.
6.	Semi-skilled manual.
7.	Unskilled manual.

In our study we found that the fathers, fathers-in-law, husbands and the subjects themselves before marriage (we took the view, for the purposes of this study, that women were capable of establishing independent social status, and their occupation before marriage was therefore noted) were concentrated in the status groups 5-7. In studying the Tables on occupational levels, Table 2 shows some difference between the mean status of the fathers of the couple; the means here are, husband's father: 5.1; husband's father-in-law: 5.4. The mean status by occupation of the respondents themselves is the lowest, 5.8. When one compares the actual status of husband and that of his father, the means are 5.4 for the husband and 5.1 for his father. The means, however, conceal some interesting and relevant differences between the social origins of husband and wife. It is evident that roughly twice as many wives' fathers (comparing them, that is, with husbands' fathers) were of relatively low social status, status categories 6 and 7, suggesting that desertion may be associated with men marrying into status categories beneath their own. Again taking the two lowest categories (6 and 7) twice as many husbands as their fathers fall into this category. The implications of such a

tendency, were it true, might well be of particular interest to an explanatory theory of desertion; and our belief that desertion may be associated with more general social failure is reinforced by other data emerging from our study. It might be noted here that in the *During Marriage* section, it was found that the husband's status by occupation had dropped from a mean of 5.4 to 5.6, a small difference, but consistent with the general tendency toward social failure we have noted.

Hutchinson found in his study that "there appears a tendency for the likelihood of upward mobility to be inversely related to paternal status, the lower a man's inherited status the more likely he is to have moved to a higher one";<sup>26</sup> and also that status has a tendency to rise with increasing age. The reverse seems to be true of the husbands of our respondents. They appear to be in a group with downward mobility on all counts.

Desertion has been regarded as "the poor man's divorce" although even the statistical studies done in the US contained no data on the occupation or economic level of the husband. It was not until 1952 that Kephart, making an occupational analysis of all the desertion and non-support cases for the year 1950 from the Philadelphia Court Records, found little evidence to support a view of desertion as "the poor man's divorce".<sup>27</sup> Slightly more than 40 per cent of the white desertions were derived from the upper half of the occupational ladder, and the supposed predominance of desertions at the lower end of the occupational scale failed to emerge. Had we had similar records available to us of all desertions it is possible that we could have arrived at the same result. Even allowing for this and for the downward trends indicated, the means we arrived at were still in the status group 5. Although Kephart does not use the Hall-Jones scale and he has not given the source of his occupation classification, it is probably safe to assume that his "skilled" and "semi-skilled" for instance, fall into more or less the same categories as in the Hall-Jones scale. The findings for our sample are that the respondents were not particularly

<sup>26</sup>B. A. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup>W. Kephart, *op. cit.*



among the "poor", even though the majority of our subjects were introduced by welfare agencies. In examining the status origin of our couples, we found that the percentage of the same status origin was no more than 30.05 per cent, which is not significantly different statistically from the figure of 37.5 per cent in Hutchinson's Dublin sample.<sup>28</sup>

### *Education*

Our scale here was a six point system:

- |              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 1. (lowest)  | No standard                |
| 2.           | Primary Certificate        |
| 3.           | Attended Vocational School |
| 4.           | Intermediate Certificate   |
| 5.           | Leaving Certificate        |
| 6. (highest) | Attended University.       |

We found the means to be 2.2 for the wife and 2.3 for the husband, a mean level slightly above primary certificate education. Comparing the educational levels of the couples, we discovered that about half had similar education to each other. Hutchinson had similar findings in his sample of 1,867 marriages in Dublin.<sup>29</sup> On the breakdown here, however, Hutchinson found that (i) only slightly more than one-third of men who failed to complete the primary course married women of similar attainments and (ii) three-quarters who received no education beyond the primary level married women with a similar education level. In (i) three-quarters and in (ii) seven out of eight cases in our sample the same result occurred. And if we take the number of couples with the same standard or just one point difference, roughly three-quarters show the same or similar education standard. This would seem to indicate that the husbands of our subjects were less likely to marry up educationally. Differences in educational attainment as well as low educational levels have been correlated with marital

<sup>28</sup>B. Hutchinson: *Social Status in Dublin: Marriage, Mobility and First Employment*, 1973 Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, Paper No. 67, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup>B. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*

breakdown, although Bumpass and Sweet<sup>30</sup> assert that only extreme differences in education are associated with higher instability of marriage. Most of our subjects and their husbands did have a low educational level, but there were no appreciable differences in the levels of education of the spouses.

On the education factor then, as with the occupation factor, the trend seemed for the men of our group to marry down educationally. This downward trend appearing again reinforces the belief that desertion may be associated with a more general social failure.

### *Siblings*

While parents have the greatest influence on children's personalities, siblings change the structure of the family and their interaction with each other may cause changes in personality. For instance, Getzels and Walsh found that first borns adhered more rigidly to societal norms and ideas than did other children in the family.<sup>31</sup> Marsden suggests that the eldest child in a large family may often have to bear the greater strain and may marry in haste at an early age.<sup>32</sup> We were interested to know if birth order had any relevance to the breakdown of the marriage.

One would expect, by definition, that allowing for sampling error, eldest children would equal youngest children in total numbers. Table 7 shows that for our study this is the case and there is no difference in the proportions comparing men and women. Psychological differences then, on the basis of birth order, are hardly relevant here as far as we can see. Table 7 also shows a higher number of middle children, which is consistent with the lower-class origin of the group, who tend to come from larger families (Table 7) and therefore have more chance of being a middle child.

<sup>30</sup>Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet: "Differentials in Marital Instability: 1970". *American Sociological Review*, 1972, Vol. 37 (December): 754-766.

<sup>31</sup>J. W. Getzels & J. J. Walsh: "The Method of Paired Direct Projective Questionnaires in the study of attitude structure and socialization". *Psychological Monographs*, 72:454 (1958).

<sup>32</sup>D. Marsden: *op. cit.*

### *Accommodation of the Parents of the Couples*

We continue to consider sameness and difference in the background of our couples before marriage and now come to parents' accommodation. We used the following scale: (1) Own house, (2) Rented house, (including house acquired through a profession or business firm but excluding Corporation house) (3) Corporation or Council house, artisan's dwelling and ex-serviceman's house, (4) Rented flat (excluding Corporation) (5) Corporation flat, Iveagh Trust flat, (6) Tenement room.

Slightly less than half the couples came from similar type accommodation. Just over one quarter of the husbands' parents' accommodation was superior. There seemed to be very little indication of anything here that might have affected the marriage, except in the cases where the husband married down it may have been indicating the continuation of the downward trend previously noted.

### *Length of Courtship*

We discussed with our subjects the length of time they had been going out with their husbands before marriage. The length of acquaintance or courtship is relevant in that if it is short it might indicate that a hasty or ill-thought-out decision to marry was taken. If it were a long courtship, then one would expect the couple to have a better understanding of each other prior to marriage and therefore to be less likely to break up afterwards. Our hypothesis here was that our couples would have a short courtship prior to marriage since their marriages ended in the particular manner they did.

Thomas, in his study of marital breakdown among Chicago Catholics, found that one out of five of his couples acquainted for six months or less before marriage, broke up within the first year of marriage.<sup>33</sup> Since this is almost double the percentage of those in his study who were acquainted for longer periods, and the latter represented a relatively uniform pattern, he

<sup>33</sup>John L. Thomas: "Catholic Family Disorganisation". E. W. Burgess, D. J. Boger: (eds) *Contributions to Urban Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, pp. 529/30.

concluded that an acquaintance of less than six months is predictive of marital discord. Thomas does not say whether his couples were desertion cases or not. Goode also demonstrated in his study of 425 divorced women in Detroit in 1948 that short acquaintance tends to lead to unsuccessful marriage.<sup>34</sup> An earlier study by Locke found that 55 per cent of divorcees had been engaged five months or less.<sup>35</sup> Period of engagement is not, however, a very reliable indicator of length of acquaintance.

In two studies, one by Burgess and Cottrell<sup>36</sup> and the other by Terman<sup>37</sup> the vast majority of the couples were acquainted for more than one year before marriage. These were studies of middle-class Americans, who could be regarded as having reasonably stable marriages. We have no figures on an Irish or Dublin length of acquaintance prior to marriage. In Ireland, however, there is a tradition of long courtships since the Famine times. Generally the idea was to delay marriage for economic reasons. This may well be still true in rural areas of the country but the evidence is of people marrying younger in Ireland.<sup>38</sup>

From the data presented on Table 9 we learn that three of our couples were "going together" for less than one year (two for six months; one for eight months). Slightly less than one-third said they had been going together for one year and roughly the same number said two years. The remainder had courtships of three years or more. The shortest period of acquaintance was six months and the longest eight years. The mean length of courtship was 2.2 years.

One couple had been acquainted for four years when the girl

<sup>34</sup>W. J. Goode: *After Divorce*. New York: The Free Press, 1956.

<sup>35</sup>H. J. Locke: *Predicting Adjustment in Marriage: A Comparison of a divorced and a happily married group*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951.

<sup>36</sup>E. W. Burgess and L. D. Cottrell: *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*. New York: Prentice Hall International, 1939, p. 406.

<sup>37</sup>L. M. Terman: *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1938, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup>B. M. Walsh: "Trends in Age at Marriage in Post-war Ireland", *Demography*: Vol. 9, No. 2, May, 1972.

became pregnant. The husband married her under duress but they never lived together. He went back to his parents, she to hers and they barely greet each other on the street now. He has never supported either her or the child who is now twenty years old. It is possible that in this case the man was not considering marriage whilst the girl was. He was ten years her senior and started taking her out when she was sixteen. He has not since made any effort to have the marriage annulled. Before he was informed that she was pregnant, this man had told the subject he did not want to see her again. The pregnancy then forced a marriage on him.

In our study some couples were "going together" for longer than the marriage lasted, for example: five year courtship—two year marriage. We see from Table 9 that all of the marriages after a courtship of less than one year broke up within five years and three-quarters of those acquainted for one year ended in the first eight years. It does not follow, however, that the longer the acquaintance the more durable the marriage since those acquainted for three years broke up within the first eight years of marriage and four out of five of those with a five year courtship did the same. There is no significant difference in the means or medians here.

Overall then our hypothesis that our subjects would have short courtships has not been proved. It is not the length of the courtship apparently in the cases of our subjects that is important but the degree of friendship attained in the time. None of these courtships either long or short produced stable marriages. It is possible too that in those courtships which were of short duration the couple might have decided not to marry had they given themselves more time to consider the matter. And this may well be a reason why the marriages ended the way they did in those particular cases, bearing in mind that no one reason in itself is likely to be responsible for the desertion.

### *Employment*

Here we will consider employment in the context of the *Before Marriage* section. We will deal with Employment as a

factor in marital breakdown in the *During Marriage* section. The question "Was your husband in constant employment before marriage?" was asked. A four point scale was used for the replies: (1) Constantly employed; (2) Casually employed; (3) Mostly employed; and (4) Unemployed all the time.

Three-quarters of the subjects said their husbands had been in constant employment before marriage.

Of the remainder, some gave sympathetic explanations—one husband was a painter and at the time there was insufficient work available; another was a student and the third found it difficult to get employment when the licensed premises in which he was a barman closed down. In the other cases the wives said their husbands could get work but got tired of jobs they had and changed them or else they would not work at all. Some went back and forth to England to work. The interracial marriage which had taken place in England was in this group of casually employed men.

If we look at the ages of these men and their ages at marriage, we find that the period about which we are talking, before their marriages, is mainly in the 'fifties. Rates of unemployment and emigration were very high then.<sup>39</sup> Only a quarter of our subjects, however, report that their husbands were unemployed before marriage and in the cases where they do, a large proportion say the men could have obtained and did have many jobs but would not keep them. It may be that in retrospect the majority of the wives saw the men as working before marriage and not afterwards, or in cases of casual or unemployment were bitter about their husbands' work record. They saw it as one of flitting irresponsibly from job to job and not as instability of employment.

Almost a quarter of the men went to England to find work and their girl friends joined them there to get married. This group were all married in the late 1950s, a time of very high unemployment and emigration rates.

<sup>39</sup>See: Central Statistics Office: *Trends in Employment and Unemployment*, Dublin: The Stationery Office for years 1950-60.

### *Behaviour and Attitudes*

We will now discuss generally the behaviour and attitudes of our couples before marriage. Here we have a one-sided explanation of the breakdown. Presumably, however, what our respondents said was true for them—as what the husband would say would be true for him. In this part of the questionnaire, the subject was encouraged to speak freely if she felt so inclined. The lines of demarcation here between the before and after marriage sections are very blurred as it is understandable that the subjects found difficulty in separating these periods, or seeing them as being distinct from each other at this stage.

### *Interests*

These questions were included to see if there was anything remarkable about the recreational pursuits of our couples, whether their interests were mutual or conflicting and could have contributed to the eventual breakdown. Interests can be divisive in that if a couple's interests conflict they may try to change each other and force their tastes on the partner. On the other hand, different interests can add to a marriage and be a source of delight to both, bringing a variety to the interaction between the parties. We asked specifically about membership of clubs, interest in sport, dancing and film-going. There was then a general question about any other interests. These questions did not yield any great variety of answering. Films and dancing, in that order, were the two most popular interests. Slightly more wives than husbands belonged to clubs, sports, social or voluntary organisations. It was noted that as one went up the occupational scale the subjects tended to mention more interests but it is not unusual to find that life is fuller and there are more facilities for recreation in middle and higher classes. Better education enables people to engage in a wider number of activities, i.e. reading, theatre, music. A higher income level enables them to engage in a wider variety of sporting activities where payment is required, for example, tennis, badminton, squash and so on. The data neither revealed any clash of interests nor any great variety of interests between the couples.

In some cases there was mutuality but this question revealed no conflict that the wives were aware of.

### *Parental Influences and Background*

People are trained in their homes in a particular way. They tend to adopt the customs and behaviour of their own family or institution where they are reared. They learn a particular philosophy of life which gives definition to their approach to the problems of life. We questioned our subjects on their parents and homes and on their husbands' backgrounds to assess whether or not there were factors present which would have affected the marital relationship, for example poor parent/child relationship which might have been responsible for inability to form a worthwhile adult relationship.

The somewhat traditional viewpoint, endorsing the attributes of a complete family environment as being essential for the proper development of the child, has been challenged by a number of investigators who stress that the presence of both parents does not automatically guarantee a better child-rearing situation.<sup>40</sup> Nye, for example, found that the adjustment of adolescents from broken homes to their general environment was more successful than that of children from unhappy unbroken homes and Marsden found that the most vivid instances of social problems in his survey involved childhood with a brutal father or step-father, or with an over-demanding mother.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, homes which are broken through death, desertion or other separations appear to have an adverse effect on individuals, and a close relationship has been found between the broken home, psychiatric illness and personality disorders. Greer, Gunn and Koller have found significant correlations between suicidal behaviour later in life and parental loss in childhood.<sup>42</sup> Landis and Landis tell us that

<sup>40</sup>See: S. Glueck and E. Glueck: *Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency*: London: 1950. Oxford University Press and J. T. Landis: "The trauma of children whose parents divorce", *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. 22, 1966.

<sup>41</sup>*Op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup>S. Greer, J. C. Gunn, K. M. Koller: *British Medical Journal*, 1966, p. 2. 1352 and S. Greer, J. C. Gunn: *British Medical Journal*, 1966, p. 2. 1355.



"Research studies have shown a combination of background factors to be related to marriage failure. Among people whose marriages end in divorce, there are more who: are from unhappy or divorced homes; had no close relationship with parents . . ."43 These two factors then—broken or unhappy homes—are associated with marital breakdown. The actual presence of both parents alone is not a guarantee of the formation of well-adjusted children. It seems also necessary that there be a good inter-parental relationship and a good parent or substitute parent/child relationship.

Turning to our own findings, we must emphasise again the exploratory nature of the study and that we cannot make any definite comparisons with the above studies. However, only two of our subjects were not reared at home with their natural parents. In the cases of their husbands, almost one-third came from homes which were broken, either by death or separation, or were illegitimate or had one or other step-parent. Some of the wives in these cases remarked that their husbands' fathers had deserted and they (the husbands) felt they could do the same. Also a few subjects said they had felt sorry for their husbands, their childhood had been so deprived, and they wished to compensate. Others reported their husbands' homes as being unhappy, with conflict between the parents.

Only two respondents mentioned their own parents in an unflattering way—one woman said she was afraid of her father and felt she had married to get away from him. She married a man whose mother had left her husband and children when they were young. Here was a case of some element of disturbance on both sides.

A quarter of the couples had neither member living at home at the time of marriage, but the reasons were mainly ones of emigration—six couples went abroad to work and marry, and four respondents met their husbands and married them while away from Ireland. There did not appear to be overt disagree-

<sup>43</sup>J. T. Landis and M. C. Landis: *Building a Successful Marriage*: New Jersey, Prentice Hall International Inc. 1948, p. 171.

ments between parents and children on the respondents' side anyway.

A comparison of our subjects and their husbands with the earlier studies shows little consistency on the wives' side in that few report any difficulties in the parental home. On the wives' evidence of the husbands' backgrounds, however, there would appear to be confirmation in a number of cases of disturbed home backgrounds, which would be consistent with marriage failure mentioned in the earlier studies.

Although we have no comparative figures, it seems to us rather significant that for a large number of our couples, one or other of them did not have a home in the nuclear family sense. When we consider first that the vast majority of our sample were Dubliners, a high rate of temporary emigration is indicated in the group. One would expect that Dubliners, being in more familiar surroundings than those from rural areas, would know their potential better and not have to move to such a large extent. Such geographical mobility indicates a restlessness and a need for change of landscape and a lack of stability. Evidence of background disturbance would seem to be more clearly indicated for the husbands and the inability on their part to sustain a personal relationship to stem from their disturbed backgrounds. The subjects came from more stable backgrounds.

We asked whether or not the wives were pleased to leave home to try to confirm whether or not there had been tension in the parental home. Our idea also was that if there had been a large family the respondent might have wished to marry to escape from crowded conditions and drudgery. Since our respondents were mostly from the lower socio-economic group, this might have been likely. We could find no evidence, however, that this was the case as from the replies there seemed no remarkable desire on the part of the girls to rush from home into marriage, with the exception of the case already mentioned of the subject who said she had married to get away from home.

#### *Parental Approval of the Marriage*

The question of parental approval was raised. Parents might

have been able to see warning signals in the relationship of the couple. Equally, the opposition of the parents to the marriage might lead to in-law conflict later.

The subject of parental approval and its effect on the subsequent marriage has long been debated. The indications are that marriages approved of and planned in public have a better chance of success than any other kind. Popenoe found in a study of 738 elopements that 46 per cent were caused by parental opposition and a smaller percentage of these marriages turned out happily than those with parental approval.<sup>44</sup>

Disapproval of the marriages in this study was expressed more by the mothers of the girls, although in some cases the father was also said to disapprove. About half the subjects said either one or both parents disapproved. Some of the parents' objections were more intuitive than real, the reasons not being very valid, for instance, "Not good enough for her"; "Just didn't take to him"; "Because he was from Artane school, he would never be any good." Other parents who disapproved had more well-founded objections, such as that the boy's parents had been separated, he appeared irresponsible to them and they felt he would find it difficult to "settle down." Another set of parents disapproved because they regarded the prospective husband's drinking as excessive. Here, however, when their daughter became pregnant, the parents insisted that she marry, while disapproving of the marriage. The girl did not want to marry but was pressurised by her own parents to do so.

Although none of the marriages in our study followed elopements caused by parental opposition, there was an element of disapproval present which subsequent events seemed to have justified. The trend for our subjects seems to follow Popenoe's finding that parental disapproval is a factor present in a number of broken marriages, bearing in mind the exploratory nature of this study, where distinct comparisons cannot be made.

In the marriages we studied, a number were disapproved of

<sup>44</sup>Paul Popenoe: *Modern Marriage*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949. pp. 222/7.

by the parents of the subjects. (We have no information on the parents of the husbands.) It seems to us that the parents, whether their reasons were intuitive or tangible, did have good grounds for their objections, borne out by the subsequent failure of the marriages. Most of those marriages with in-law problems later on, had been disapproved of by the parents beforehand. Those later problems may have been triggered off by the initial objection, but the fact remains that parental disapproval was a component of some of these marriages.

#### *Courtship Pattern and Communication*

The length of courtship and its implications have already been discussed. We now turn to the courtship to discover the level of mutual or complementary interests which would give information about the degree of communication between the couple before marriage. This seemed to us important since ability to communicate before and after marriage is a good indicator of the stability of a relationship.

Landis and Landis stress the importance of pre-marital communication and of establishing the habit of talking things over during the engagement. The understanding of each other's views and feelings are, they say, essential in a successful marriage.<sup>45</sup> Komarovsky, commenting on self-disclosure or communication of the subjects in her study on the marriages of blue-collar workers in the US, found that the level of education was very important--

We had expected the level of education to make a difference in the fullness of self-disclosure, but the extent of the difference is surprising. The high school graduates, both male and female, share their experiences in marriage much more fully than do the less-educated persons.<sup>46</sup>

Komarovsky also writes about the concern with the meagreness of marital communication of many students of the subject, who sometimes imply that if only the floodgates were to open it

<sup>45</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *op. cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>46</sup>M. Komarovsky: *Blue Collar Marriage*. New York: Random House, 1962, pp. 144/5.

would flow abundantly. She believes that the impoverishment of the quality of life not only narrows the overlapping of interests between husband and wife and consequent sharing, but it also stunts personal development. The psychological sophistication required for discussion of even television programmes was missing in many of the families she studied. Another interesting point made by this author is that, generally speaking, it is not the personality of one mate, but the interplay of the two personalities that impairs communication. No studies have been done in Ireland on the relationship between levels of communication and marital disruption. Lack of communication between the sexes is a talking point in Ireland and it is often suggested that the levels are lower than anywhere in the world. A possible explanation is that intra-sexual inhibitions are strengthened by an environment of repression of feelings and a society where the ideal of masculinity is one which rules out expressiveness and identifies personal interchange as a female characteristic.

First we asked where the couple had met. Just over one-third of the respondents originally encountered their husbands at a dance or party and a quarter said they had been introduced by friends. Some met through a work situation and others on "blind dates". There was also an assortment of "knowing each other all their lives"; on excursions; just in a local crowd; in a picture house; on holiday; and a pilgrimage to Lourdes led to a meeting. The important thing here is that none of the women thought their way of meeting strange or unusual. Any of the variety of ways of meeting reported by our subjects were acceptable as the norm in their particular stratum of society. This is not to say that any one of the types of meeting already mentioned, for example, the holiday romance, could not be a contributory factor in the desertion, and in the particular case we found it probably was, since the couple continued to see each other only at rare holiday times and did not appear to know each other very well when they eventually married.

Most of the couples spent their time together during courtship attending films or dancing. Some mentioned walking

together, but only few remembered their courtship days as being full of mutual interests. One particular subject commented that she had nothing in common with her husband-to-be and they just went to the pictures together.

When we compare these answers with those to the question on discussion before marriage about life together, we find that those who reported having many common interests also reported having discussed their future life. One subject qualified this by saying it was not mature discussion but superficial while another said they had "talked (themselves) to a standstill". A few said they had spoken about getting married but never about their lives after marriage and some said they discussed children in a very wide sense, for example, that they would adopt if they had none themselves.

Our findings and those of earlier studies agree that those who reported a fairly good communication level were the higher educated, middle-class members of the group, who were more likely to be better communicators anyway. In general, there was not a habit of "talking things over" during the courtship, which Landis and Landis feel is essential for a marriage to be successful. Although the Irish experience in general seems to point to poor communication between the sexes, in the case of our group, this poor communication contributed to the breakdown and as we shall see later, it is most often mentioned by our subjects as an adverse factor in their marriages, even though the majority of our respondents came from the lower socio-economic stratum, where communication is not regarded as quite as important as in the middle classes. On the other hand, one middle-class respondent said she had felt quite happy in her marriage and thought she had a good communication bond with her husband until he deserted and she discovered he had had another life apart from her and left her for another woman—a relationship she had never suspected existed. From this example we can see how it is possible for a wife (or a husband for that matter) to be blind to the real situation so long as their own needs are being fulfilled. This circumstance does not necessarily arise from selfishness but is just a more

sophisticated breakdown in communication than that experienced in the working-class respondents.

We conclude from these findings that the communication level for the couples in our study was low, that they had not used their courtship as a learning experience, they were acting out a process of getting to know one another by going out together, as was expected of them before marriage being the pre-marital pattern in our society. They were not, however, communicating and were merely going through the motions.

#### *Plans for the Future/Accommodation Plans*

Adequate provision for the future, within a person's own definition, is not characteristic of all human beings. Some do plan for the future while others do not. The instinct of the hibernating animals ensuring that sufficient food is on hand for the long winter can be seen to compare with the savings and preparation for future need, for example, accommodation of the couple prior to marriage. We felt that this planning characteristic would indicate the presence of a level of responsibility towards marriage, a realisation of the on-going composition of the relationship. The absence of this characteristic, on the other hand, might denote an attitude of not seeing beyond the marriage ceremony and therefore a lack of understanding of the commitment involved.

The majority of our subjects saved little or nothing. This in itself may not mean very much since a great number of people with responsible attitudes do not regard it as being essential to save for marriage. They are most likely, however, to be those with well-paid, secure jobs or the necessary education and experience to ensure their chances of always having some means of earning their living. What it seemed to us, from our respondents reporting here, was that marriage itself was the goal to be aimed at without the realisation on the on-going nature of this relationship they were entering.

As regards accommodation plans, again, few had worked out exactly what they planned to do. Some hoped to get Corporation houses or flats, a small proportion said they hoped

to save after marriage for a house, others planned to live with relatives and made no other provisions.

If we take these factors of savings and plans for accommodation as indicators of levels of responsibility, then, obviously, a majority of our couples were irresponsible. Perhaps, however, lack of provision for the future may be class based so we looked at our "responsibles" and indeed found that they were the middle-class group plus one or two others. The main bulk of the "irresponsibles", characterised by no savings and no plans, were in the lower socio-economic bracket where no doubt because of poor wages and instability of employment, no tradition of savings or planning exists. However, this lack of a responsible attitude might not be conducive to the establishment of a firm base on which to build a marriage. For instance, if newlyweds must live with relatives, the difficulties of adjustment are magnified by lack of privacy for one thing. Again, stress can be caused with the arrival of a baby in inadequate accommodation. These strains on a marriage at its critical time—the first five years—would, undoubtedly, hinder the successful adaptation of the couple to their new environment. It is appreciated that most of our couples would not have been able to save a great deal or provide themselves with perfectly suitable accommodation prior to marriage because they came from the lower socio-economic groups, so we can only speculate on the possibility that their cavalier attitudes to provision for the future affected the marriage.

#### *General Attitudes Towards Getting Married*

The problems we discuss under this heading are those encompassing the deserted wife's expectations from her marriage—what she saw as the essentials to make a marriage work; whether or not she had doubts about the chances of success of the marriage she was entering; what she thought were her husband's views on marriage; whether she felt that marriage brought status; were her girl friends married before her and would she have been worried about remaining single? The relevance of these questions is based on the belief of the



investigator that pre-marital attitudes possibly give a clue to the causes of the eventual breakdown, in that the reasons for marrying might point to say, a lack of personal involvement and commitment—for example, a subject marrying because all her girl-friends were married and not being worried about whom she married. This lack of commitment to the person married might constitute a problem if the expectations of the other party included this commitment. Husband or wife could well blame their partner if the marriage was disappointing. If our subjects believed certain components, whatever they were, necessary for a happy marriage, and if these were missing, conflict and stress might result if the parties were unable to adjust to the actual situation.

Since it was obviously not feasible to interview the deserting husbands and it was felt that knowledge of their attitudes would be useful to give as full a picture of the situation as possible, we asked the subjects why they thought men in general, and their husbands in particular, married. We hoped to be able to get our subjects to cast their minds back to their pre-marriage days to see if there was any clue in their husbands' pre-marriage attitudes, to what might later be a source of stress. Also it was felt that such a question might indicate whether or not there was a good level of communication between the parties, evidenced by the fact that the subjects had some idea how their husbands thought. Ability to communicate seemed to us a very important indicator of happiness in marriage.

Marriage, (as previously stated) is a contract for life and involves a special commitment. Doubts about getting married are probably healthy and indeed their absence may indicate an unrealistic approach to marriage. Those who would say they were reasonably happy about entering marriage might be displaying a responsible attitude, in that they were aware of the seriousness of the undertaking. On the other hand, there might have been good grounds for their being only reasonably happy about marrying if, for instance—the bride was pregnant, even if they had intended to marry. We wondered, however, if our subjects would all fall into the group who had serious

doubts but chose to marry anyway, and that this might be the key to the marriages ending in the particular manner they did. To commit oneself to marriage having serious doubts about the success of the relationship would seem to indicate pressure from some sources—possibly paternal or social—i.e. pregnancy or desperation to get married at all costs. It was felt that a marriage, entered into under such pressure and where serious doubts existed for at least one of the parties, had very little hope of surviving. The more positive the motivation the more likely is an undertaking to succeed is hardly in need of stressing here. Then those who did not think at all about getting married were likely to be those who saw marriage as the goal for everyone and something that happened to one, more than a conscious decision. Again, because of the nature of the contract and the commitment involved, we felt an attitude like this might not be conducive to a stable marriage.

There have been interesting changes in the attitude to marriage in Ireland: Connell's discussion of the Irish wariness of marriage in post-Famine days, in contrast to the happy-go-lucky marriages of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, is an example.<sup>47</sup> There is some evidence that the pre-Famine situation may be returning with a strong upward trend in the annual marriage rate since 1958—in fact a forty per cent overall rise since then. So whether the reasons be economic or social or both, the fact is that marriage has become more frequent in Ireland; and since its frequency has increased, so no doubt, has its popularity.<sup>48</sup> The question of being worried about not getting married was included with the question of whether or not friends were already married. An element of competition entering in this way might well have diluted the personal aspects of the relationship. In any case, the search for status, or the wish to be married for its own sake, may not provide a satisfactory basis for a sound relationship. Such attitudes smack more of the old, traditional style, institutional

<sup>47</sup>K. H. Connell: *Irish Peasant Society*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

<sup>48</sup>B. M. Walsh: "Ireland's Demographic Transformation", Dublin: *Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 3, Number 2, January, 1972.

marriage. It may well be that this kind of marriage, because it is based on a different set of expectations, as discussed previously, has a better chance of succeeding than that dependent on the personal relationship alone. We asked these questions to see what kind of marriage our subjects had, since they were examples of breakdown of marriage.

Considering studies done which have discussed these kinds of pre-marital questions, we turned first to Straus, who asked a group of men and women in the US, who were engaged or had been married less than one year, to list the needs they hoped to have satisfied in marriage.<sup>49</sup> They listed individual needs, kinds of emotional support or response each one individually hoped to receive from the other, for example, "Someone to love"; "Someone to confide in"; "Someone to respect my ideals". These needs could only be met, Straus suggests, in marriages which have good communication between the partners. It is not surprising, then, that for the couples in the Landis and Landis study, (also in the US) some of whom were married for ten years, "Communication with each other" was rated the most important value.<sup>50</sup> Other factors rated as important to marital success by these couples were love, mutual emotional need, sex and children. These marriages were mainly happy. Burgess and Wallin found in their study of one thousand engaged couples in the United States that four out of five men and women considered love a necessary condition for marriage.<sup>51</sup> Komarovsky speaks of poor communication between the sexes, and of the women of her study who, although they did not expect much companionship, yet found that reality thwarted even these modest aspirations. Komarovsky's one consistent finding was "that all persons—

<sup>49</sup>A. Straus: "A Study of three Psychological Factors Affecting Choice of Mate". Summarised in E. W. Burgess and H. J. Locke: *The Family*. New York: American Book Company, 1960, pp. 365/69.

<sup>50</sup>J. T. Landis and M. J. Landis: *Building a Successful Marriage*, New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1968, pp. 9/10.

<sup>51</sup>E. W. Burgess and P. Wallin: *Engagement and Marriage*, New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1953, p. 393.

men and women—who rate ‘very meager’ on self-disclosure are unhappy in marriage’.<sup>52</sup>

On the reasons why men marry, a study by Slater and Woodside examined the reasons for marrying of a wide selection of British soldiers in hospital from 1943-1946. They found that the emphasis on sex was not as important as expected and that desire for a home was the most common reason for marrying.<sup>53</sup>

According to Landis and Landis (in the United States), there is a very high association between pre-marital confidence in the future of the relationship and later marital happiness. Only four per cent of this sample who had no doubts before marriage now rate their marriages as average or unhappy, while fifty per cent of those who were “very uncertain”, but married anyway, now say the marriage is average or unhappy.

What Landis and Landis have to say about attitudes towards getting married is also relevant. “Many who marry at a very young age are acting in unquestioning response to the idea that marriage is the universal goal—the thing to do for everyone. They move obsessively toward marriage without knowing what it means or what it will require of them”.

The analysis of responses from our subjects proved difficult. Though some of the women were articulate, their ideas and opinions may have changed in retrospect, and they may have spoken about their present feelings rather than of those before a marriage which had been a bitter experience for them. It might be assumed that, when asked about the prerequisites of a happy marriage, the subjects spoke of their own biggest problems, since a few mentioned very specific matters (like housing); and when we checked why they thought desertion had occurred in their marriage, we found that their greatest problem had been in finding suitable accommodation. This they felt, was the cause of the start of the breakdown. Bearing this in mind then we proceeded.

We divided the replies to the question on the prerequisites for a happy marriage into five categories into which they seemed

<sup>52</sup>M. Komarovsky: *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>E. Slater and M. Woodside: *Patterns of Marriage*, London: Cassell, 1951.

to fall naturally. These were as follows: *Economic*: meaning that the subject mentioned money, housing, or security in her answer; *Affection*: where the subject spoke of love or affection (We did not ask for a definition of "love"; and indeed subjects might have defined it as communication or co-operation. We were more interested to see how often the word would arise.) *Communication*: the third category, including trust and the discussion of problems. Our fourth category was *Co-operation* which covered planning, and doing things together. The residual category, *Other* contained miscellaneous replies which could not be easily allocated elsewhere.

By far the greatest number (over half) spoke of communication as a necessity. Our subjects particularly mentioned "no secrets" as being a prerequisite for happy marriage; and many felt that their husbands had not shared whatever there was to share, and that they had been unable to trust them. A smaller number (about a quarter) referred to economic factors as being crucial while about a fifth thought co-operation was most significant. Only one in ten mentioned love or affection of any kind. Among the "Other" group, some mentioned children, consideration, or that the man should not still want a bachelor life. A few had no views at all on the issue.

An attitude which came to our notice was that of the woman whose idea of marriage was one where she no longer had to work. Many of our subjects expressed the view that young girls today still felt marriage was a way of getting out of having to go to work each day. These women had felt this themselves and mentioned it as a motive for marriage. They mentioned it in passing and as an indication of their ignorance of the real state into which they were going. They did not feel this would have had an effect on the marriage but just as "what a fool I was to think I was going to have an easy life, never having to go out in the morning", and so on.

Passing on then to the women's views as to why men get married, we found a great variety of suggestions. However, slightly less than a third of the subjects could not answer, or did not know what the answer might be. A number stated derisively

that men married "Mostly for sex and a housekeeper". Many mentioned love and sex in answer to this question, although love and affection were mentioned by only a small minority in their answers to the preceding question on the prerequisites for happy marriage. Sex was not mentioned at all in that context.

Three-quarters had had either no doubt at all, or only reasonable doubts, about getting married. The balance were those who had serious doubts at the time, but thought it would work out, or had been forced into marriage through pregnancy, or to legitimise a child already born.

Only a few of the subjects felt that marriage brought status. Most felt that they had wanted to marry—few said now that they had felt differently then, and two-thirds thought they would not have been worried about remaining single, although some said they probably would have done so if they had not married so young. When we looked at the group who admitted to worry about remaining single, we found amongst them the youngest subject at marriage (17 years), together with four who had been nineteen and one who had been twenty-one at marriage. These, nevertheless, expressed the same fears of being left on the shelf and of wanting children, as were expressed by the older members of the group, whom they outnumbered.

Although our group is not comparable with those of other studies yet our informants (although, of course, they were asked a slightly different question) were not as subjective as Straus's group in their answers. By this we mean that our respondents gave replies that would be termed interpersonal, like "To be able to talk to each other", while Straus's respondents concentrated on personal needs. However, Straus suggests that the needs expressed by his respondents could only be met where good communication existed between the partners. By far the greatest number of our subjects stressed communication as a prime necessity. "Love", while not defined in the Burgess and Wallin study, was mentioned by a very high proportion of both men and women in their sample. We observed that our subjects did not mention it. This difference, apart from the

lack of statistical validity of our sample, may be class based, as the Burgess and Wallin sample was composed of university undergraduates; but it is at least equally likely that our subjects, looking back from their present state of desertion, do not remember feeling love for their husbands before marriage. They certainly do not feel it now. The finding of Komarovsky that there was an association between lack of communication and marital tension seemed to have been supported by our subjects, who criticised the low level of self-disclosure and empathy manifested by their husbands, both before and after marriage. It was the view of only a few women that their husbands had married in order to obtain a home and children; and as we have seen there was a positive emphasis on the man's sexual needs. This trend bears no relationship to the findings of Slater and Woodside; but this in turn may be an outcome of the poverty of communication between the couple, about which wives complained. Naturally, in such circumstances subjects may not have known why their husbands married, and had sought an explanation in the light of their subsequent behaviour. On the level of personal psychology, the reaction of some wives might have arisen from their wish to be (or dislike of being, as they thought) a love or a sex object: but on this issue we have no direct evidence.

The main conclusion emerging from this section was that there existed a great desire for better communication between husband and wife. The deserters, for the most part, rated "very meagre" on self-disclosure, according to their wives' account; and for this reason our subjects had felt unable to trust their husbands. Such a view of marriage (that there should be no secrets) might reflect the desire for the fulfilment of the romantic ideal that calls for completeness of communication. Since this was not achieved, our respondents accordingly felt that their expectations had not been realised. The fact that the majority had had few doubts about the success of their proposed marriage, reinforces our belief that a romantic notion of marriage had been widely held—a belief given further support by the number who saw themselves as the love object of their husbands.

It therefore seems likely that many were dissatisfied with their marriages because reality diverged too greatly from the romantic state of their imagination; and so this interpretation, actual lack of communication, lack of doubts about the success of the marriage, or indeed any of the specific matters mentioned may not be important in themselves; these are present in a great number of marriages that remain stable. But for our subjects they became significant because they were symptoms of a more general malaise that they felt, but did not openly recognise: disillusion.



### SECTION III

#### *During Marriage*

THE demographic aspects of the couple during marriage will now be considered and an effort made to relate these to the breakdown of the marriage.

##### *Age at Marriage*

Up to the present, research has not been able to determine the relative contributions of pregnancy status, low income, unwise choice of mate and other factors in addition to age that combine to produce the association between age at marriage and marital instability. Research on the relationship between marital adjustment and age at marriage, however, suggests that early marriages are closely associated with subsequent unhappiness.

Here we can call upon many authorities, notably in the US, who state that youthful marriages are more prone to break up than more mature ones. Hornell Hart, for instance, studied hundreds of cases from divorce courts and courts of domestic relations in the US and came to the conclusion that maturity is essential to a wise marriage choice.<sup>54</sup> Thomas regards early marriage as a symptom of emotional instability or as a causal factor directly affecting the marital situation.<sup>55</sup> Glick and Bauman in their studies also emphasise that those who marry early are considerably more likely to experience greater marital discord and dissolution than those who marry at a later age.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Hornell Hart: *The Science of Social Relations*. New York: 1927, pp. 393/4.

<sup>55</sup>John L. Thomas: "Catholic Family Disorganisation", E. W. Burgess and D. J. Bogue (eds.). *Contributions to Urban Sociology*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 530.

<sup>56</sup>Paul C. Glick: *American Families*. New York: Wiley and Sons, 1957 and Karl E. Bauman: "The Relationship between Age at First Marriage, School Dropout, and Marital Instability: An Analysis of the Glick Effect". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 29:4 (Nov., '67), pp. 672-80.

Landis and Landis take the view that the characteristics necessary for a mature relationship require time and experience for development and they say that although it is difficult to isolate the youth factor, evidence indicates that the more successful marriages are not the very youthful ones.<sup>57</sup>

Chester regards this common-sense explanation, that the fault lies in the immaturity of the individuals concerned, as over-simplifying the issue. He says that:

Viewed sociologically, the chronological ages of spouses are only significant to the extent that their years adversely affect their competence to play the appropriate marital roles. There are structured differences (for example, by social class) both in sex role definition and in the bases of marital satisfaction, and these in any case are subject to historical change. The achievement of maturity has other aspects than the development of firm identity, such as the attainment of economic, sexual and reproductive viability, and the importance of maturity in the personal development sense will partly depend on group-validated assumptions about marital relationships. If these stress traditional breadwinner/housekeeper roles rather than sensitive and fulfilling inter-spousal communication, then mature identity is not such an essential quality for stable marriage . . .<sup>58</sup>

Glick and Norton tell us that from the Survey of Economic Opportunity which the US Bureau of the Census conducted in the spring of 1967, the majority of men who obtained divorces were those who married at ages 20-24 years.<sup>59</sup> The American level of divorce is higher than that of any European nation, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Japan. These nations have a similar low age at marriage, however, but even though they

<sup>57</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *Building a Successful Marriage*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall International Inc. 1948, p. 121.

<sup>58</sup>Robert Chester: "Current incidence and trends in marital breakdown". *Post Graduate Medical Journal*. (September 1972) 48, p. 535.

<sup>59</sup>Paul C. Glick and Arthur J. Norton: "Frequency, Duration and Probability of marriage and divorce". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. May 1971, p. 307.

have a lower divorce rate than the US, early marriage is still associated with high divorce rate. Bumpass and Sweet, again studying marriages in the US, indicate that marital instability varies widely with varying combinations of age at marriage, ranging from fifteen points above the mean when the wife is under seventeen and the husband under nineteen to nine percentage points below the mean when both are over age twenty-two.<sup>60</sup>

We have seen the common-sense reasons put forward by Hart, Landis and Landis, Glick and Bauman that immaturity is attached to youth and that maturity is essential for a wise marriage choice. Thomas approaches the age factor from the point of view of youthful marriage being a symptom of emotional instability in itself and Chester took the more complex view that age only affects marriage adversely when it adversely affects people's competence to play their appropriate role in marriage and this ability is influenced by all sorts of factors. Chester goes on to say, however, that from the data currently available it is impossible to separate the different effects of the numerous breakdown-disposing factors associated with youthful marriages. He agrees with Winch that at the moment "no analysis has appeared that would warrant a definite conclusion on this point".<sup>61</sup>

The one consistent finding emerging from all this is that the termination rates for youthful marriages are invariably higher than the rates for older marriages. Physical development is plainly not enough to sustain a relationship even in the early stages of marriage. When the wider significance of the relationship is required, it is not capable of developing because of the emotional and possibly social immaturity of the parties. Entering marriage involves a commitment of a special nature.

In Ireland the late age at marriage was at one time a remarkable phenomenon in Europe, although it has declined substantially in recent years. We are not concerned here with

<sup>60</sup>Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet: "Differentials in Marital Instability: 1970", *American Sociological Review*, 1972, Vol. 37 (December): 754-766.

<sup>61</sup>R. F. Winch: *The Modern Family*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1971.

tracing the origin of the Irish pattern of late marriage—this has been the subject elsewhere of much expert examination.<sup>62</sup> There has been a marked trend towards greater equality between husbands' and wives' ages in Ireland over the postwar period.<sup>63</sup> This was as a result of an unequal decrease in the age at marriage of grooms and brides which diminished the average age-gap between groom and bride from 5·8 years in 1925/6 to 3·4 years in 1965.<sup>64</sup>

The United Nations Demographic Year Book 1958 and Census data give only figures for Ireland as a whole so we turned to Hutchinson's 1969 study for a Dublin sample of adult males.<sup>65</sup> The mean age at marriage is 28·0 years. There is no similar information available for brides in 1969 but the Census figures give the average age of brides in Ireland in 1969 as 25·3. Tables 10 and 11 show that the grooms in our study have a mean age at marriage of 24·5, much lower than the Dublin population in general, and the brides in our study, with a marriage age of 22·7 on average, were also much younger at marriage than the national average. In the cases of the grooms we also have a class breakdown from Hutchinson's study of Marriage, Mobility and First Employment.<sup>66</sup> Taking the status category 5-7, from which most of our sample came, we find that although the age at marriage (26·9) is lower than the higher status categories, (28·5) the grooms are older than our sample by more than two years.

When we looked at the age of the bride related to that of her groom (Table 12) we did not find that our teenage brides tended to marry men considerably older than themselves as was suggested by Walsh for the normal population; but we did

<sup>62</sup>K. H. Connell: *The Population of Ireland 1750-1845*. Oxford, 1950 and *Irish Peasant Society*, Oxford 1968.

<sup>63</sup>B. M. Walsh: "Trends in Age at Marriage in Postwar Ireland". *Demography*. Vol. 9, No. 2. May 1972.

<sup>64</sup>C. Gillman: "Recent Marriage Patterns in Ireland". *Christus Rex*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, Jan., Feb., March, 1969, p. 49.

<sup>65</sup>For a description of this sample, see B. Hutchinson, *Social Status and Inter-Generational Social Mobility in Dublin*. Dublin. ESRI, Paper No. 48, October, 1969.

<sup>66</sup>Bertram Hutchinson: *Social Status in Dublin: Marriage Mobility and First Employment*. Dublin: ESRI, Paper No. 67, January, 1973.

find that the inequality of age was least when the bride was in her mid-twenties.<sup>67</sup> The diagonal ratio here was 62.5. It seems that our brides and grooms were both young at age of marriage—teenagers and those in their early twenties marrying each other.

What we found was that our couples were younger than the national average and in the case of the grooms younger than the Dublin average. As Chester pointed out, if the breadwinner/housekeeper role is the one stressed most, maturity may not be as important as it would be for the more sensitive inter-spousal communication. We have already shown that our subjects laid stress on this latter aspect of their marriage which would seem to indicate that Chester's thesis, of maturity being vital in that type of relationship, is implied by the failure of these marriages.

One cannot isolate the age factor but our subjects and their grooms were in the group where termination rates of marriage are highest, even controlling for class variations.

We turned then to a consideration of relative age at marriage, that is to say, comparing the age of the groom with that of the bride. (See Table 13). There is some speculation that age differences between spouses can affect the happiness of marriages. We were interested then to see what the relative ages of our couples were.

Burgess's study in the US found that the largest proportion of good adjustments were where the wife was older than the husband.<sup>68</sup> This finding appears to be representative of studies done and belies the current notion that the husband should be somewhat older than the wife. It seems that only if age differences is extreme—20 years or more either way—does it create problems because of the generation gap and possible conflicting interests and viewpoints.

Blood and Wolfe on the contrary suggest that a man who marries a woman older than himself does so because he needs a mother substitute but they are commenting only on the dynamics of marriage and have not examined the rate of

<sup>67</sup>B. Walsh, *op. cit.*

<sup>68</sup>E. W. Burgess, *op. cit.*

breakdown for these particular marriages as the other authors have done. So they do not say whether this particular age differential (wife older than husband) is more likely to be present in a broken marriage.<sup>69</sup> They only suggest that there may be fewer rewards in terms of companionship and empathy in these marriages because of less emotional maturity at least on the part of the husband.

To quote Bumpass and Sweet again on relative ages of husband and wife, they find that when husbands are in the age group 20-24 a high level of instability occurs if their wives are older.<sup>70</sup> In Hutchinson's study the relative ages of grooms and brides in Dublin<sup>71</sup> are: seventy per cent of the grooms in his sample older than their brides; 17.5 per cent the same age. Only 12.5 per cent were younger. Hutchinson points out that the size of the majority differs according to the husband's age at marriage.

Table 13 shows that about half the grooms in this study were older than their wives, roughly one-sixth were the same age and a very high proportion, relatively speaking, were younger (about one-third). This suggests that there was a high proportion of younger grooms, irrespective of age group. We cannot, however, take this to mean that if the bride is older than her husband it is more likely that the marriage will be unstable, since when we take a closer look at the "younger" grooms, we find that with the exception of one five-year differential, the rest were only one or two years younger than their brides. The significance of this, we feel, in relation to marital breakdown is that the young married the young, rather than that there was any considerable age differential.

### *Pre-Marital Pregnancy*

Having discussed age at marriage and discovered that our couples were younger at marriage than the national and Dublin

<sup>69</sup>Robert O. Blood, Jr., and Donald M. Wolfe: *Husbands and Wives*. New York: The Free Press, 1960, p. 211.

<sup>70</sup>L. L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet, *op. cit.*

<sup>71</sup>Bertram Hutchinson, *op. cit.*

average, we now turn to the factor of pre-marital pregnancy. This is closely associated with age at marriage since younger brides appear to be more likely to be pregnant at marriage than those in their mid-twenties or older. The question of pre-marital pregnancy brings in the element of coercion, since a marriage undertaken because of pregnancy is not generally regarded as being entered into by mutual consent. The difficulties in a marriage brought on by pre-marital pregnancy stem from a possible sense of hostility by one or other party and a feeling of being trapped into the marriage, whether they previously intended to marry or not. It seems likely that this sense of grievance will be discharged when difficulties arise and will block any efforts to solve differences. The couple, no doubt, also expect judgement from others and this builds up guilt feelings and anxiety in them—not a very good basis on which to start marriage.

Rowntree's study from a national sample in Britain in 1964 showed that of those whose first child had been conceived before marriage, 12.2 per cent had later parted and 6.8 per cent contemplated doing so. On the other hand, of couples whose first child was conceived after the wedding, only 6.4 per cent actually separated, and only 3.1 per cent thought about it.<sup>72</sup> It would appear then from these figures that the risk of breakdown is double for marriages where pre-marital-pregnancy is a factor.

Christensen<sup>73</sup> demonstrated that the difference between the success rates of marriages with pre-maritally conceived children and those without them is less in a society which attaches less stigma to illegitimacy and pre-marital sexual behaviour. Where such a stigma exists, as in Ireland, there is quite an amount of pressure, on parties who may not be suited, to marry to make their pre-marital behaviour respectable. However, Christensen found that even in a country like Denmark where pre-marital

<sup>72</sup>G. Rowntree: "Some Aspects of marriage breakdown in Britain in the last thirty years". *Population Studies*. Vol. 18.

<sup>73</sup>H. T. Christensen: "Cultural Relativism and pre-marital sex norms". *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25.

sexual relationships are tolerated to a relatively high degree, the divorce rate of brides pregnant when married is about 50 per cent higher than those who were not. Taking this a step further, Danish brides who had an illegitimate child before marriage were even more likely to divorce than those who were pregnant at marriage. Danish brides who had no pregnancy history before marriage were the least likely to divorce.

To refer to Thomas again he, in studying Catholic couples in Chicago, included breakdown of marriages which would not have been contracted, at least when they were, if the bride had not been pregnant.<sup>74</sup> He feels that, considering current dating patterns, a good number of these marriages must succeed. In 51.5 of the cases that separated, the couple had only the one child alleged to have been the cause of the marriage.

About one-third of our subjects admitted to being pregnant before marriage. The majority of these, however, said they intended to marry each other anyway. There were two forced marriages, both brides were under twenty-one years old. In one case the groom was unwilling and in the other the bride. Most of the brides pregnant at marriage were under 21, and the mean age at marriage was 20.9 years as compared with 24.8 for those not pregnant.

Whether in the case of our subjects there was resentment at the time and whether or not the pregnancy precipitated the marriage, it is impossible to say. Whether or not the subject admits that there was an element of pressure, it seems likely that there was, even where a couple were engaged. There was one case of an engaged man running away for one week before the wedding. He did return but caused an amount of anguish in the meantime.

Only one of our respondents reported a situation where they had only the child who had caused the marriage—the rest had an average number of 3.79\* children. All of the studies seem to

\*This is the average for 39 marriages, total number of children being 148.

<sup>74</sup>John L. Thomas: "Catholic Family Disorganisation". E. W. Burgess and D. J. Bogue (eds.) *Contributions to Urban Sociology*. Chicago 1964. University of Chicago Press, p. 538.



assume that the marriage would not have taken place had there been no pregnancy. This may not be true. In our study only two of the marriages were really forced. It is true, however, as we mentioned, that the presence of any element of compulsion, even where a marriage was to take place, is not an ideal start. This is what is most damaging to the relationship.

The association of pre-marital pregnancy with marital breakdown holds for a proportion of our group. The relationship of youthful marriage and pre-marital pregnancy is maintained within the group, those pregnant at marriage being considerably younger at marriage than those who were not.

### *Number of Children*

A discussion on the possible influence of children on the marriage will take place later. Here, we shall confine ourselves to the actual numbers, sex differences, mortality rates and ages of the children.

The 1961 Census for Ireland<sup>75</sup> gives a figure of 3.53 children per family for Ireland. Infant mortality and stillbirth rates for the Dublin City and County Borough in 1969 were 2.13 per cent and 1.37 per cent respectively.<sup>76</sup> A study of problem families was carried out by the Family Service Units in Britain, commencing in 1954. One hundred and twenty-nine mothers were interviewed. Of the six hundred and eighty-six children to whom they had given birth, 4.8 per cent had died.<sup>77</sup>

Only one mother in our study had reached menopause so the account of fertility is incomplete for the other subjects—the mean age at first desertion being 29.43. Although the families were incomplete, the average number of children born live was 3.73 while the average number still living is 3.38. It was difficult to work out a *de facto* duration of marriage since in a number of cases the husband returned on occasions. This brings up the problem of what Chester calls “opportunity to

<sup>75</sup>Central Statistics Office: *Census of Population, 1961*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

<sup>76</sup>See: *An Roinn Slainte: Tuarascail ar Staidreamh Beatha*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969. p. XXXVI.

<sup>77</sup>A. F. Philip: *Family Failure*: London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963. p. 26.

conceive" in that some wives had children by their husbands after the first desertion.<sup>78</sup> Because of the impossibility for our subjects of giving us even reasonably accurate information on this point, we decided to regard duration of marriage as being length of marriage to first desertion. The duration of marriage was, on average, 6.68 years.

There is a range of from one to eleven live births per mother. The present age range of the children is 31 years to 3 months; the mean age is 10.2 years. Sixty-two girls and seventy-three boys are still living; the mean age of the girls is 11.0 years and of the boys 9.6. The number of children who died either through accident or at birth or through illness in childhood was fourteen out of a total of 149 born to our subjects—a percentage of 9.3 overall.

Some interesting facts emerge on the analysis of the causes of the deaths of the 14 deceased children in our study. Death by accident was reported in two cases—one young man of 20 was drowned; a child of five was killed in an automobile accident. However, of the twelve remaining deaths, infant mortality accounted for nine cases—a percentage of 6.04. The deaths were mostly in the first few weeks of life, only one lived for 3 months. In a number of cases the mother did not know the cause of death. Examples of when mothers were aware of the cause of death are: one baby was reported to have been born with an abdominal obstruction; one died as a result of gastroenteritis; another is said to have died as a result of a Caesarian birth and yet another because the mother suffered from toxæmia prior to the birth. The rate of still-births for our subjects was 2.0 per cent.

Our couples had a higher than average number of children in only 6.68 years of marriage: the percentage of infant mortality was almost three times the Dublin rate and although the difference in still-births was not great, (2.0 to 1.37) ours was the higher figure. This may well be a function of the socio-economic status of our respondents and not indicate any trend, although

<sup>78</sup>Robert Chester: "Is there a relationship between childlessness and Marriage Breakdown". *Journal of Biosocial Science*. 1972. 4. p. 448.

as already mentioned Kephart found that the families of desertion cases contained more children than other families. An explanation for the high infant mortality rates, apart from the *s.e.s.* function, may be either the disturbance in the home leading to an effect on the unborn child or on the mother's ability to care for it after birth because of the emotional upset in her marriage.

#### *Accommodation*

Poor quality housing is usually regarded as being associated with low level of adjustment in marriage, yet research workers have largely neglected to study the influence of housing on the quality of marriage. Our investigation of this area aimed first to see whether or not the newly married couple lived with parents or other relatives. If they did, we felt there might be some element of friction. Another point was that constant changes in accommodation could be indicative of irresponsibility as was lack of planning or saving, unless the changes were to improve the quality of the accommodation.

One study, however, which tried to assess the effect of poor housing has had to look for indirect evidence by measuring the frequency of quarrels and arguments between the various members of the family. This study, carried out in Baltimore, USA by Wilner and his colleagues, tested a totally Negro population of one thousand families. One half were rehoused and the other half, on the housing waiting list, acted as controls. Both groups were tested before, and the test families after the transfer. There was only a small and not significant reduction in the incidence of quarrels and arguments between husband and wife in the group that were rehoused.<sup>79</sup> From this one study there seems little relationship between inadequate housing and high marital friction level. Further study is needed to prove or disprove the theory.

There were a small number of complaints about accommodation from our subjects. Of those who complained half of

<sup>79</sup>D. M. Wilner (*et. al.*): *The Housing Environment and Family Life*. John Hopkins, Baltimore, 1962.

them said their poor accommodation had been the fault of the husband and not the authorities. Husbands who refused to pay rent or debts and wanted to move constantly were in this group, as were husbands not settling in jobs; constant separations through disagreements leading to either party going back home and quite suitable accommodation being vacated. The other half of those who complained, however, spoke of inability to pay rent and consequent changing from flat to flat. Periods of waiting for accommodation were 10 years, 8 years, 3 years and 2 years. Even allowing for this, only one woman really felt housing had been a major problem for her. Yet if one looks at her record she had several Corporation flats and is at present living in one and is quite satisfied. She said she had hoped she would get a house but that hope never materialised. She even let arrears of rent accumulate expecting that she would be moved to a poorer housing area and get a house. She did eventually get a house but only remained there for three years, thereafter getting a cottage and finally her present flat. A rather sad case was where an aunt of the husband's had a room which she let to the couple, all of them hoping that the house would soon be condemned but this did not happen and the couple had to wait eight years for a Corporation house. The cramped conditions of one room certainly contributed to the deterioration of the relationship and this subject said her husband went to the public house and she to the public library to get away from it! Some couples deliberately moved to Griffith Barracks, a notorious converted Army barracks, which serves as a half-way-house to those awaiting accommodation, and were rehoused in a short time.

We asked our subjects where they lived when first married. Slightly less than one-third went to live with either set of parents or other relatives; nearly one-half went to live in flats; about one-sixth rented a room; only one in twenty had a house and one found a cottage. Because we assumed that suitability of accommodation might be expected to be correlated with stable marriage we questioned our subjects on the number of times they changed accommodation during the time they

lived with their husbands and found an average of 2.2 moves in 6.68 years. Five couples did not move at all and three had a singularly high number of six moves in 7, 8 and 5 years of marriage respectively. We have nothing with which to compare these figures and perhaps 2.2 moves in under seven years is the norm for newly married couples. Those who moved from four to six times did so for reasons such as wishing to be on the move, not wishing to pay rent (on the husband's part) and what we need to distinguish between is change due to lack of *proper accommodation* and *desire to change for personal reasons* such as those listed above. Both of these type of reasons may lead to difficulty for the marriage but as we are speaking of lack of proper accommodation, those who desired the changes cannot be considered in that context. Only six respondents then were in the category of needing proper accommodation.

Of those who went to live with parents or relatives and subsequently changed accommodation, some did so only when deserted. One subject, married four months, was deserted and returned home from her sister-in-law's house where she had lived with her husband. Another subject did not leave her home after marriage and some time later her husband went to England to find work, returning at holiday periods. This was what we called our "emigrant desertion". Yet another subject in this group stayed at home while her husband returned to England after marriage where he lived, and after some time she went to live with him there. She had to return to Ireland as her mother was ill but her husband did not come with her and she did not return to England.

Most of our subjects who had to live with relatives reported that they got on very well. The few exceptions we will discuss in a later section on in-laws. Thus if we take our subjects' views, only a small proportion had complaints about their accommodation or felt it had a bearing on the eventual break-up and of those who did complain, the cause was attributed in some cases to the husband. It must be borne in mind that this is not an objective view of accommodation but of the subjects' perception of it. In some cases the subject was

quite pleased to remain at home where the accommodation might be very inadequate and the husband dissatisfied. She did not see it that way because it was her own home.

### *Social Status and Employment Record During Marriage*

When we checked social status by occupation we found as already mentioned that the mean status level of the husbands had fallen slightly—5.6 as compared with 5.4 before marriage. Because status has a tendency to rise with increasing age<sup>80</sup> this drop may be important and further support our opinion of the husbands' general social failure being associated with desertion.

Because, all other things being equal, a steady work record is associated with stability of personality, and also correlated with a good marriage relationship, we raised the question of our subjects' husbands' employment record during marriage.

Goode in his study of divorce in the US found that there was a relationship between divorce and a bad work record.<sup>81</sup> Dominion, the psychiatrist, states that there is ample psychiatric evidence to indicate that "... a poor work record, as shown either by the frequency of change or the failure to attain a post commensurate to the individual's potential, is connected with marked psychological disorders".<sup>82</sup>

It is not possible for us to debate the psychological disorders factor but it does seem that the men in our study were not often unemployed, hence their income was fairly stable. The subjects reported in slightly less than half the cases that their husbands were never unemployed. This is in line with their pre-marriage recollections. About one-quarter said their husbands were very seldom unemployed and the remainder varied between "unemployed sometimes" and "always unemployed". Over three-quarters of our subjects' husbands then were seldom unemployed which indicates that unemployment was not a big

<sup>80</sup>See B. Hutchinson: *Social Status and Intergenerational Social Mobility in Dublin*. Dublin: ESRI Paper No. 49, 1969, p. 16.

<sup>81</sup>W. J. Goode: *After Divorce*. The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956.

<sup>82</sup>J. Dominion: *Marital Breakdown*, London: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 25.

problem. Here some of the subjects reiterated that their husbands were always able to get jobs but went from one to another, or if they had to leave one job were always able to find another.

When we asked whether or not a husband told his wife how much he earned, and whether he gave her what she regarded as a reasonable amount to keep the household, we found that slightly less than half the wives were told how much their husbands earned but could not say whether it was the truth or not, except in the few cases where the husband gave them his pay slip. Just over half thought their husbands gave them a reasonable amount for household running costs. Of those who felt they were not receiving a reasonable amount, one or two said that it was due to their husbands commencing to drink to excess, or such other reason. The amount they then received was decreased from that received when they married first. Only about one third received periodic increases. One would have thought that satisfaction with the amount received would include receiving increases when, say, another baby was born, but this did not follow. We will relate these particular questions to later questions on the subjects' present situations.

The frequency with which the husbands of our respondents changed jobs and occupations and indeed their slight fall in status in the process leads us to believe that, as Dominion says, their behaviour is connected with psychological disorder. As we said previously, a discussion on this aspect is outside the scope of this study but the indications remain that deserters may be suffering from psychological disorders, and be thereby unable to sustain either a long term work record or a close relationship.

Although employment was fairly regular for most of the families encompassed by our study, yet there was mobility of labour and this can often put a greater strain on a family than the breadwinner having a poorer, but constant, job. The husbands of our subjects may well have been having difficulty in *keeping* jobs and since they were poor communicators, their wives were probably unaware that this problem existed for

their husbands. On this question of unemployment, a proportion of the husbands certainly manifested a problem, which, according to their wives, was one of irresponsibility towards work. This irresponsibility towards work may have been the presenting problem while the real one was of a deeper, psychological nature.

### *Wife's Employment During Marriage*

If our subjects were not adequately supported by their husbands during marriage they might find it necessary to take employment. We were interested to know did they work after marriage and if so, why? Did the wife working cause conflict?

How many women in Dublin with small children work? Only 17.4 per cent of the married women in the non-farm workers sample of Walsh's study worked.<sup>83</sup> Nye finds that couples where the wife works quarrel more frequently than one income couples<sup>84</sup> and Gianopulos and Mitchell from a study in Philadelphia say that when conflict occurs in working-wife families, almost all the significant differences are concentrated in the "domestic-economic" field.<sup>85</sup>

Almost three-quarters of our subjects worked at some time during their marriage. Of those who gave us reasons for working it seemed they had worked only in periods of financial stress or unemployment of the husband. These periods were short and seldom, yet because of the labour mobility factor, the wives found a financial strain even if their husbands worked constantly since they often changed jobs. A few subjects said they had to work to pay off debts incurred by their husbands, or to support themselves when their husbands did not. When we looked at the husbands' employment record for the cases where the subject said she had to work because she needed the

<sup>83</sup>B. Walsh: *The Labour Force Status of Women*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, Paper No. 69, 1973.

<sup>84</sup>F. Ivan Nye and Lois W. Hoffman: *The Employed Mother in America*. Rand McNally and Co., Chicago, 1963, p. 270.

<sup>85</sup>A. Gianopulos and H. E. Mitchell: "Marital Disagreement in Working Wife Marriages as a function of Husband's Attitude toward Wife's Employment". *Marriage and Family Living*, XIX (November, 1957), 373-78.



money, three-quarters said their husbands had never been unemployed or "only sometimes". The implication here may be either that the husband earned poor wages and was unable to support his family or that he was in constant employment but failing to supply his wife with the necessary means to keep the family fed. When we turn to look at whether or not the subject knew what her husband earned and whether he gave her enough to "run the house", slightly more than half said they knew how much their husbands earned and also received sufficient from him. There seems to be some contradiction here in the answering. It is not the fact of the women working but the reasons they gave for doing so that make their replies seem contradictory.

Almost three-quarters of our sample worked at some time during marriage. We could not get precise particulars of periods of work, we have no information as to whether or not our subjects worked in relation to the number and ages of their children. The percentage working at all seems however, very high.

We did not find that the couples in our study quarrelled about the wife working, except in one case where the wife was a supervisor in a factory and her husband was an operative. The conflict in the subjects' marriages were not concentrated in the "domestic-economic" field as Gianopoulos and Mitchell found, but then again ours was not a random sample.

The reasons for working in our subjects' cases were the poor support given by the husbands and conflicts in the marriage. Very few did so for interest or self-satisfaction.

### *In-Laws*

Sharing a home with in-laws need not necessarily create an in-law problem but it does require a greater effort on the part of all concerned to avoid conflict. More dovetailing of personalities is needed and it is obvious that those living in separate households experience less strain. Conflict, from whatever source, is divisive. We enquired from our respondents whether or not they had lived with in-laws and if so, how did they 'get on'.

Where in-law conflict adversely affects a marriage it is more likely to do so in the early years of the marriage, according to Landis and Landis, although some couples settle into a permanent state of friction with in-laws.<sup>86</sup> Thomas found when he examined the case records of seven thousand marriage failures that had passed through the Catholic Separation Courts in Chicago, “. . . in-laws are not out-laws, since in only a little over 7 per cent of our cases did in-law problems emerge as the chief source of conflict. Further analysis of the data also reveals that the charge of in-law interferences sometimes appears as a *post factum* rationalisation, or is founded on a distorted view of normal extended family relationships”.<sup>87</sup> Thomas also discovered that when in-law problems do occur, they occur early in marriage, and if not quickly resolved, readily lead to failure.

Slightly more than two-thirds of our subjects reported having lived with in-laws at some time during their marriage. For some it was before they found their own accommodation, for others on returning from abroad, perhaps after some years of marriage and while awaiting suitable accommodation here. Of those who did live with in-laws, however, less than half reported conflict, and this minority was almost equally divided—just very slightly more wives were in conflict with husbands’ parents than husbands with wives’ parents. Of those who lived with in-laws and reported no problems; two-thirds lived with subjects’ parent or parents while less than one-third lived with the husbands parents, the balance with relatives.

Did those who reported in-law problems regard them as a chief source of conflict in their marriages? Only two subjects reported it so. One of these was a couple who returned to live with subject’s mother and retarded brother after the death of subject’s father. The couple sold their own house and invested the money in a new kitchen and other alterations in the old house. The retarded man was constantly goading the subject’s husband and using vile language in undertones. His mother

<sup>86</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>87</sup>John L. Thomas: *op. cit.*, p. 535.

had lost some degree of hearing and would say the husband was imagining the whole thing. The husband gradually began to stay out late at night and to drink heavily and eventually left without trace. In the other case the presence of the respondent's mother was the main cause of conflict, and the subject admitted that she relied on her mother a great deal. She had returned to her parents' home when her husband joined the Army. Subject's mother did not like the husband. He soon returned home and then decided to take up professional boxing. He went to England but only stayed three weeks, coming back and taking his wife to live with his mother. The couple returned to live with subject's mother shortly afterwards when she won a house in the Corporation draw. Subject felt a duty towards her mother, who, she said, had been very good to her. She now feels that she had been rather unfair to her husband in forcing him to live with his mother-in-law when there was conflict and that this was the main cause of his desertion. Other cases also reported various types of friction between either member of the couple and in-laws but not the main cause of conflict. Most of the couples reporting friction with in-laws were where they lived with them in the early years of marriage.

In-law conflict then was most likely to adversely affect the marriages of our subjects in the early years. A very small proportion regarded it as the chief cause of breakdown and not a *post factum* rationalisation.

In considering this in-law problem in our study, although it did follow that in-law problems occurred and did so early on in marriage, yet for the number who actually lived with in-laws, the amount of conflict was very small. A possible explanation is that the subjects who lived with their parents did not feel there was any conflict between their husbands and themselves due to in-laws, because the in-laws were their parent or parents. We might well have different answers here if there had been an opportunity to question the husbands.

### *Children*

The influence of the presence of children in a marriage is a

long debated subject. Majority opinion seems to feel that children are essential for a marriage to be a marriage within their definition, which regards marriage and family as synonymous. There is at present a slight swing in the direction of marriage being seen as a union between two people, without the addition of children. However, at the moment, most marriages in Ireland anyway have children and as we have seen the marriages of our subjects had a particularly high number. The intention here then was to enquire about the subjects' attitudes towards children, and whether these attitudes affected the relationship or not.

There appears to be a general impression that children tend to keep a family together and that divorce rates are higher among childless couples.<sup>88</sup> This must not be seen, however, as childlessness causing divorce but rather that a great number of divorces occur in the very early years of marriage before children are born at all. Chester argues this very ably, pointing out that it is the *de facto* duration of marriage, (the actual number of years in which there is opportunity to conceive) that is important, since divorce often takes place after a few years of separation. Thus the *de jure* number of years married may be quite different from the *de facto* in divorce cases. It is the *de jure* number of years, (i.e. the number of years from the date of marriage to the date of the divorce proceedings) that is counted in census figures and other records in countries where divorce is available.<sup>89</sup> The relationship between divorce and childlessness is thus seen as possibly a spurious one.

In desertion cases on the other hand, as was previously mentioned, there are more likely to be minor children present in the home,<sup>90</sup> and Mowrer regrets the lack of "statistics showing the number of children in normal families for each year period of married life to prove or disprove that children

<sup>88</sup>See: Patterson, S. Howard: *op. cit.*, John L. Thomas: *op. cit.*, p. 531; E. Slater and M. Woodside: *op. cit.*, and J. Klein: *Samples from English Culture*, London, 1968, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>89</sup>Robert Chester: *op. cit.*, p. 443.

<sup>90</sup>W. M. Kephart: *op. cit.*, p. 596.

tend to prevent family disorganisation". Mowrer also contends that if the duration of marriage is taken into account, the numbers of children in desertion cases is above what would be found in normal families, (taking "normal" as families who stay together) so it seems unlikely that children prevent desertion.<sup>91</sup> A study by Lewis and Jeffers in the US notes that separations and desertions tend to occur at the time the wife is pregnant "A major point of pressure for the low-income male" the authors observe "appears to be an increase in family size with no comparable increase in family income or earning capacity".<sup>92</sup>

Burgess and Cottrell show that attitudes towards having children are important indicators for future marital happiness.<sup>93</sup> They conclude that it is the attitude towards having children rather than the actual size of the family that is important and since most people have children, a positive attitude and a desire for children are more likely to make a successful marriage.

Numerous studies have tried to determine whether or not there is a relationship between happiness in marriage and size of family. Landis and Landis quote Terman, Hamilton and Bernard as finding no significant difference between the happiness scores of childless and non-childless husbands and wives and in their own study the Landis couple found that childless couples tended towards extremes in their adjustments, being either very happy or unhappy, while those with children approached an average in happiness.<sup>94</sup>

An enquiry carried out in France concludes the women usually consider the ideal number of children as being higher than that of men. This enquiry came to a conclusion, hazardous by their own admission, that it was the husband who was more

<sup>91</sup>E. W. Mowrer: *Family Disorganisation*. University of Chicago Press 1927, pp. 102/3.

<sup>92</sup>Hylan Lewis and Camille Jeffers, "Poverty and the Behaviour of Low Income Families", Paper presented to the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Chicago, May 19, 1964.

<sup>93</sup>E. W. Burgess and L. S. Cottrell, *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. 1939, p. 260.

<sup>94</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *op. cit.*, p. 462.

likely to limit to two the number of births.<sup>95</sup> Gorcer, in Britain, on the other hand, quotes a study where more fathers than mothers were pleased at the latest pregnancy. There are grounds for supposing, says Gorcer, that in many large working-class families it is the fathers who refuse to use contraceptives or allow their wives to use them.<sup>96</sup> One needs to be careful with a result like that, however, as any social worker knows that husbands often do not trust their wives sufficiently to agree to their using contraceptives since they feel the wife would then be free to have intercourse with other men. Often a husband will deliberately make his wife pregnant in order to keep her at home. The refusal may not necessarily be a desire for a large family.

Dominion, in his capacity as a psychiatrist and marriage guidance counsellor, cites the incidence of severe post-puerperal illness, affecting the marital relationship.<sup>97</sup> The impact of these severe illnesses in marriage was followed up in eighty-one cases studied at Shenley Hospital in England and an incidence of seventeen per cent ending in separation and divorce was found, which is slightly higher than that for the average population of Britain. These are depressive or schizophrenic illnesses, which appear following the birth of a child.

A study by the Mowrers in Chicago in 1928 developed a fourfold classification of family tensions.<sup>98</sup> One of these—incompatibility in response—may lead, as Mowrer elsewhere suggests, to a wife finding in her relationship with her children “. . . compensation for the lack of satisfaction of the wish for response from her husband, but this tends to relegate him to a rôle in which his importance in this aspect of the relationship is diminished”.<sup>99</sup>

These two studies both support the idea of the mother having

<sup>95</sup>M. L. Roussel and Mme Zucker: “L’Attitude des Diverses Generations a l’Egard du Mariage, de la Famille et du Divorce en France.” *Population*, juin, 1971.

<sup>96</sup>Geoffrey Gorcer: *Sex and Marriage in England Today*. London: Nelson 1971.

<sup>97</sup>J. Dominion: *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>98</sup>E. R. Mowrer and Harriet R. Mowrer: *Domestic Discord*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928.

<sup>99</sup>Ernest R. Mowrer: “Family Disorganisation”. E. W. Burgess and D. J. Bogue (eds.). *Contributions to Urban Sociology Chicago*: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 505.

a greater commitment to the family. In Ireland, although we have no evidence to support it, it has long been the subject of debate that a mother finds in her relationship with her children, particularly her sons, recompense for a poor marital relationship.<sup>100</sup>

Landis and Landis say that a common complaint among wives is that husbands do not take enough responsibility in training and caring for the children. Many husbands go into marriage with the attitude that training the children is the responsibility of the wife and that the husband's duty is to support the family.<sup>101</sup> Goode observes that the withdrawal of economic support by a man from his family at lower-class level is laden with less guilt than might be supposed, because "one of the components of the attitudinal complex of the lower-class divorced father toward his children is a tendency to think of them as belonging more to the mother than to himself. They are primarily her task and responsibility and her waning loyalty relieves him of at least some of his guilt concerning the children. If she no longer 'deserves' his support, then neither do they".<sup>102</sup>

In Philip's study of family failure most of the fathers were involved emotionally with their children and some expressed this verbally.<sup>103</sup> In only 28 per cent of the cases where there was a male head were the fathers aloof from their children and appeared to take little or no part in their management and care.

Turning to our non-representative sample, our subjects stated that they had wanted children but with the low level of communication between the couples before and during marriage it is not known what the husbands' attitudes were. It may be that societal norms in Ireland which regard children and marriage as being synonymous may have resulted in a belief that there was no choice in the matter. A lack of any free family planning advice and the unavailability of contraception

<sup>100</sup>See for instance Humphreys, A. J.: *New Dubliners*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

<sup>101</sup>Landis and Landis, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

<sup>102</sup>W. J. Goode: *After Divorce*. New York: The Free Press, 1956.

<sup>103</sup>A. F. Philp: *Family Failure*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963, p. 158.

probably creates a situation where marriage is always thought of in terms of children.

The breakdown of the marriage or the desertion by the husband was not directly associated in our subjects' minds with the birth of a child. It was remarked upon only in the sense that the birth of a particular child gave a time perspective to other events, not as a cause of breakdown in itself. One man, however, deserted when he discovered his wife was pregnant about four months after marriage. His wife regarded his action as irresponsible and unreasonable, but we have no way of knowing whether the news of the arrival of a child constituted pressure on this man or whether he had an aversion to fatherhood or indeed whether there was another reason.

About one-third of our subjects mentioned that they had suffered some post-puerperal illness and of this one-third only three stated they had suffered from nervous complaints. One subject had a complete breakdown when her second child was a few months old. The subject associated the breakdown with the birth of the child. Another of these three subjects said her "nerves were a bit upset" on the birth of the third child. There had been some trouble in the marriage prior to this child's conception and this may have precipitated the nervous condition. The third subject said her "nerves were bad" after two particular children were born. She was completely unable to plan her family (eight full-time pregnancies and one miscarriage in eleven years) and she hinted that she would have preferred a smaller family.

The remainder of the one-third of our subjects who told us they had suffered some illness after the birth of babies mentioned worry about their marriage as being the main factor in their inability to recover quickly. Other reasons for poor recovery such as anaemia and thyroid deficiency were also cited. None of our subjects regarded their post-puerperal illness as contributing in any way to the subsequent desertion. The illnesses do not appear to have been severe except in the one case of the breakdown already mentioned.

We asked our subjects whether or not they had considered



the children more important than their husbands and had treated them in a different way. The answering here was evenly divided—half said no, the children were not more important to them than their husbands and they had not treated the children so. Those who said yes elaborated in some cases by saying that it became necessary to do so because of the husbands' behaviour. One respondent said that "only for the children I'd be in the 'Gorman' ".<sup>104</sup> Another respondent said it was "in her nature" to feel the children were more important and another said that her mother had blamed this over-emphasis on the children for her husband deserting. Yet another subject answered that her husband thought she made the children more important than he, but she felt she had not.

It seems that half of our subjects considered that they had not made the children more important than the husband. For that proportion it does not necessarily follow that they found compensation in their children for a poor marital relationship. This group may not have wished to admit such a possibility, however, as in some cases the answer to the question was a very curt "No". Also, on our subjects' evidence the majority of husbands felt the children were of little or no importance, and only helped with them occasionally or not at all. The possible changes in life style that children might bring were then discussed. Just over half of the respondents stated that their lives had not been changed through the arrival of children but some of these saw their role as staying at home looking after the children anyway. Others said they managed to get baby-sitters and so were able to go out socially. Two subjects said they never went out socially after marriage, so having the children made no difference.

Of those subjects who said their lives had changed, (nearly one-half) most said they were no longer free to go out and two subjects complained that they had had too many children too quickly. Another subject said her life changed because she had

<sup>104</sup>The 'Gorman' is the colloquial name for St. Brendan's Mental Hospital, formerly known as Grangegormon Hospital.

devoted herself completely to her children but she was content to do so.

One or two husbands, when the subjects tried to discuss home matters or children, told their wives that that was their job and not to bother them with such problems. Well over half of the husbands gave no indication of being interested in having a say in the care and management of their children, and the problems arising from these.

Children may limit the social life of the couple. Unless there is a relative or other convenient baby-sitter available, a couple may never be able to go out together. When enquiring about social life, we asked how often the couple went out together after marriage, not the number of times but whether they considered they went out as much as before marriage, less than before or never after marriage. A minority of our subjects felt they got out as much after marriage as before and were satisfied with their social life. How they were able to do this was that they had never gone out much anyway or that they always managed to get baby-sitters.

Having children was the main reason that those who were able to go out a lot before marriage had to limit their social life afterwards. Other reasons, such as the husband not wishing to be seen with his wife when she was pregnant, or the husband who always asked his wife to go somewhere with him at the last minute when there would be no baby-sitter available were given.

Of those subjects who said they never got out socially after marriage (a small minority), some said they were never asked; others that their husbands went to the pub while they stayed home; a few said there was a shortage of money. These subjects said they did not mind that the money was scarce except when their husbands went out without them and spent the much needed cash on drink.

Nearly all of them mentioned the children in their answer, in that they were able to go out because they got baby-sitters or were not able to go out because of the children. Where children existed they were the reason for staying at home. The husbands

did seem to go out by themselves. If children were to be regarded as being instrumental in keeping families together and childlessness associated with divorce, our findings would in no way confirm these studies, since our subjects had a higher than average number of children in a smaller *de facto* number of years married always bearing in mind the s.e.s. function. On the other hand our study seems to show a trend more in line with Kephart's study, which discovered the greater likelihood of minor children being present in the home where desertion occurs and Mowrer's who contended that if the duration of marriage is taken into account, the numbers of children in desertion cases is above what would be found in normal families.

Although some subjects thought that they could perceive the commencement of the breakdown as being around the time a particular child was born, they would not directly associate it with the desertion. It was remarked on as merely fixing on a time when they regarded their marriage as breaking down, rather than as being the cause of the breakdown. Our subjects had a positive attitude towards having children and their husbands do not seem likely to have had a negative one, given the Irish circumstances, yet their marriages failed.

No conscious decision was taken by the couples as to the number of children they would like to have or could provide for. Children just seemed to arrive. The marriage relationship was not very satisfactory and the level of communication was low, so it is hardly likely that decisions like those taken in the French inquiry or in that quoted by Gorer would apply to our subjects.

We found no evidence to confirm the existence of any conflict due to post-*puerperal* illness as cited by Dominion.

Since about half of our subjects felt they had made a distinction between the children and the husband, favouring the former, and a proportion of those who said they had not made a distinction were not very definite about it, there would seem to be indications that the subjects sought compensation in their children, as the Mowrers suggest wives do. Those subjects who

defended this action of theirs did so on the very basis that the Mowlers mention --that of "compensation for the lack of satisfaction of the wish for response from her husband". This cannot be taken as a general conclusion in all desertions but was true of our subjects.

The husbands' behaviour in taking either no responsibility or very little for the training and caring for the children confirms that there was very little emotional involvement of the fathers with their children.

From the foregoing, it is evident that children did not prevent the desertion and may even, because of the extent of the responsibility involved in a large family, have caused the man to desert. The children were not as vital a part of the husbands' lives as they were of their wives, and it was this feeling, of the children being more the responsibility of the women, that left the husbands free to go without taking the children or being so emotionally involved with them that they were unable to abandon them. The subjects expressed the opinion that to leave children without support was something they found difficult to understand. From the husbands' point of view, however, the position may have appeared quite different.

In so far as husband and wife not going out together may have contributed to the eventual desertion, the presence of children would certainly have been the important factor here since it prevented the couple going out together. Because the husband went out alone, it was possible for him to meet other women socially as a single man if he wished. He could also stay out knowing his children were being looked after if their care interested him, whereas if his wife was with him, they would have to return home to relieve the baby-sitter. Thus where the children prevented the couple going out together, it could have lead to the husband going alone. This in turn could have resulted in him deserting his wife for reasons not directly related to the existence of children or the couple going out together, for example, his meeting another woman, but the existence of the children and the unavailability of baby-sitters might be the root causes.

There is some evidence to suggest from the replies of our subjects that the husbands found themselves on the outside, as it were, of the family group and sought consolation or involvement either through drink or adultery. This point will be discussed further later but the main conclusion here is that the children proved a divisive element in the marriages we studied.

### *Discussion of Problems*

As with the pre-marriage experience of our subjects, that their husbands-to-be would not discuss problems or talk about themselves or their hopes and fears, so during the existence of the marriage this same inability to communicate continued. Only one in ten subjects said they could talk to their husbands with any kind of satisfaction. The remainder said they were told either they should have no problems, or the husbands did not want to know because they were not interested. The subjects did not mention whether or not their husbands were prepared to discuss their own problems, but it seemed that they would not do so either. For the most part they would not discuss any matter with their wives.

### *Sex*

Increasing emphasis is being placed on sex as a rewarding experience and the achievement of a good sexual relationship as an essential part of a happy marriage. Expectations about this side of the marriage relationship have been rising in Ireland as elsewhere, with the result that in many cases disappointment ensues and it becomes an area of conflict. We felt it important to enquire from our subjects as far as possible whether their physical relationship was a rewarding or a conflict-provoking experience.

Although sexual incompatibility is frequently said to be *the* major cause or at least one of the major causes of marital failure, there is no scientific evidence to prove that this is so. Many researchers take the view that sexual adjustment depends on, and is a reflection of, adjustment in other areas of marriage. Burgess and Wallin state that the available statistical evidence

does not demonstrate whether sexual adjustment is cause or effect of success in marriage. They say "It indicates there is a moderate relationship between the two, but does not demonstrate the direction in which it goes. The relationship appears to be of about the same magnitude for men and women".<sup>105</sup> In a study of 739 couples married in Britain between 1950 and 1959, 48.2 per cent reported adjustment difficulties but only 3.2 per cent referred to sexual ones. Even more significant is the fact that out of the thirty-five couples (5 per cent) who separated or contemplated separation only one informant reported sexual difficulties.<sup>106</sup>

Sexual adjustment on the other hand is held to be a sensitive index of happiness in marriage. A number of studies indicate that a positive association exists between sexual adjustment and satisfaction with marriage.<sup>107</sup>

Patterson in his study based on cases brought into the Domestic Relations Division of the Municipal Court of Philadelphia, says "In the list of causes of desertion given by the wives, sex excess will appear in a small number of cases. The proportion may be greater than is actually alleged and recorded. On the other hand, the trouble may frequently be not sexual excess upon the part of the husband, but rather sexual anaesthesia upon the part of the wife".<sup>108</sup>

Burgess and Wallin state one of the important trends in American culture accounting for the increasing significance attached to the sexual aspect of marriage is the separation of intercourse for pleasure and intercourse for reproductive purposes.<sup>109</sup> They trace this to the decline of the religious conception of sex and the availability of relatively cheap and safe devices for birth control. Komarovsky feels that the interviews she carried out suggest that the size of the correlation between

<sup>105</sup>E. W. Burgess and P. Wallin: *Engagement and Marriage*. New York: Lippincott, 1953, p. 696.

<sup>106</sup>R. M. Pierce: *Sociological Review*, 1963, 11, p. 215.

<sup>107</sup>See, for example, Lewis M. Terman *et. al.* *Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1938, and Ernest W. Burgess and Paul Wallin: *Engagement and Marriage*, Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1953.

<sup>108</sup>Patterson, S. Howard: *op. cit.*

<sup>109</sup>E. W. Burgess and P. Wallin: *op. cit.*, p. 656.

the sexual adjustment of a couple and their happiness in marriage may vary with class. She concludes that "Because some of our less-educated women expect little psychological intimacy in marriage, and their standards of personal relationships are not demanding, they were able to dissociate the sexual response from the total relationship". This she found to be true in her study of blue-collar marriage in the United States.<sup>110</sup>

We found it very difficult to estimate in how many of the marriages sexual difficulties arose. As might be expected here there was a general reticence on the part of our subjects to talk about this area of their marriages. However, it did appear there had been difficulties and some of the subjects said these were caused by their husbands starting to drink to excess and they did not feel inclined to make love to them in that condition and refused until, as one subject said, "he treated me right".

A majority regarded sex as an important component of the marriage relationship. They qualified this by saying it was certainly not "the whole of it" but it was a main issue. Just over a quarter answered that they always enjoyed the physical side of their relationship. There was some rather reserved answering and as has been found in many other investigations, the subjects talked about the sexual side of their marriages in a negative way—i.e. that sex was not very important anyway. If they were positive about their answers, they were brief and brusque and tried to prevent the investigator from probing any deeper. This may indicate a reluctance to discuss sexual matters or that they were not prepared to admit to the investigator the existence of problems in that area of their marriage. Only six respondents gave what might be called positive answers to these questions. They seemed to have had reasonably satisfactory relations and were not inhibited about answering the questions. This six accepted them naturally whereas some of the other respondents became uncomfortable and edgy about answering.

In slightly over one-third of our cases the wife reported

<sup>110</sup>Mirra Komarovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

sexual excess on the part of the husband and actual bad experiences. Only one subject, however, mentioned sexual assault on any of the children and this woman had a great deal of trouble in this area of marriage. She had twice contracted venereal disease from her husband and she said he was a sex maniac.

In spite of the paucity of information obtained on this question, the general impression we found was of either our subjects regarding sex as part of the overall relationship and not to be engaged in or enjoyed otherwise or of using it as a bargaining weapon to persuade their husbands, for instance, to stop drinking. We found it very difficult to get at the core of the matter and this difficulty in itself indicates an inhibited attitude towards sexual matters which was most likely to have been carried into the marriage with not very satisfactory results.

As far as this study is concerned it seems unlikely that sexual problems were *the* major cause of the breakdown leading to the desertion. The cause and effect argument of Burgess and Wallin is plausible and a minor crisis in the relationship may have been exacerbated by the wife's refusal of intercourse or the husband's poor handling of the situation of his wife's unwillingness. Our subjects' statement that they refused intercourse when their husbands had been drinking, which in itself might seem reasonable enough, is totally dependent on the manner in which the whole situation is handled and the quality of the existing relationship. If the latter was poor, then the refusal would be seen as another step in the deterioration process or a device to punish an errant husband.

Our subjects' marital problems may not have arisen from their unsatisfactory sexual relationship. Compatibility in this area however, is a sensitive indicator of marital happiness as we previously have seen, so because a majority of our subjects regarded sex as an important factor in marriage it seems likely that problems arose. When the marriage relationship was not satisfactory, it showed in a poor sexual relationship, bringing us back to the cause and effect argument.

If we take the cases of sexual excess, one-third of our subjects



reported such problems. This seems a high proportion, and what Patterson says about his subjects is possibly true of ours too—that it is probably not the whole story. Some of these unpleasant experiences were, as stated previously, when the husband started to drink to excess. As to the possible sexual anaesthesia of the wife, we cannot say, except that some subjects were avoiding the issue and we can only assume from this that difficulties arose, and if anaesthesia was present, it may or may not have been brought on by the behaviour of the husband. We just do not know.

Regarding the trends in American culture which account for the increasing significance of the pleasurable aspect of intercourse, the question arises about the Irish situation. Whatever about the decline in the religious concept of sex in Ireland, which is at least questionable, there are certainly not generally available relatively cheap and safe devices for birth control, yet only six of our respondents equated sex with reproduction and regarded it as its main function. All the rest, with the exception of those who gave very brief answers, and whose opinions, therefore, we do not know, seemed to expect a pleasurable experience. Our subjects regarded sex as very much part of the total relationship.

The overall picture then on this question seems to be of sexual difficulties arising from a deteriorating relationship. That it is a hen and egg situation is also possible, although our subjects who did elaborate denied this and were emphatic that the behaviour of their husbands made them change their views and behaviour in sexual matters within marriage. Because of the sensitivity of this area and the reticence in answering the questions, a really sharp picture of the situation is impossible to get. A deeper study in this area is needed to confirm or reject our view that in so far as our subjects were concerned, sex was important to them and their husbands, and caused conflict because of its importance. There is no evidence that this particular issue caused the desertion by itself but because it was a ground for disagreement, it did not help to avoid the desertion.

### *Commencement of Breakdown*

The pertinence of asking our subjects when they felt the breakdown of their marriage commenced is that there is an association between the cause of breakdown and its commencement. If we could find at what stage the subject thought her marriage relationship was deteriorating we could get at the reason why, since the adverse factors present at that time would indicate the possible explanation for the eventual breakdown.

Almost one-third of the subjects said things went wrong from the beginning of marriage. One respondent said they had no place to go when they married and no money and she was pregnant so they started badly. But even when they did find suitable accommodation, her husband started going out every night and staying out until early morning so the breakdown had already commenced and if good accommodation was the remedy, it came too late. Another man disappeared four months after marriage when he was told his wife was pregnant. Some said their husbands were completely different when they married them—their faults had been hidden—one was a much heavier drinker than his wife had thought, another discovered after the honeymoon that her husband owed a great deal of money. He would never let her handle money and she felt she should be allowed handle the housekeeping money at least. The bills were not being paid, which worried this subject a great deal. Another respondent, who was the white partner in an inter-racial marriage, said her husband had married to escape from another woman, but continued to date other women while married to her, particularly when a pregnancy became obvious. There was a situation where a couple went to live with his parents after marriage and his family tried to split them up. Here was an example of severe in-law conflict.

Those who said they felt things started to go wrong after a particular child was born, as previously stated, did not relate the birth of the child with the breakdown but it seemed to them that the situation got worse from that particular time.

For instance, one subject felt that her husband had wanted to get away because of trouble with a neighbour and he had been

getting into bad company. She fixed it as being around the time their second child was born. Another subject said she felt things started to go wrong after the first baby was born. There had been a serious disagreement about contraception. Her husband was in favour of it while she was not. Incidentally, this was the only case where contraception was mentioned as being a cause for disagreement. Some subjects placed the time of their husbands' increased drinking or starting to go out alone in or around the time a particular child was born. One subject said her husband was very tall and attractive and liked women to admire him. Around the time their fourth child was born she had an idea he was going dancing although he always denied it if asked.

The rest of our respondents gave various other times during their marriages as being the commencement of the breakdown. Some mentioned a change of job leading sometimes to the husband starting to drink heavily, for example, one husband changed his job to that of a night taxi driver and got into the habit of drinking with other taximen during the night between calls. A policeman changed his job to that of night manager in a hotel. Others said that after a few years their husbands found a girl friend. One subject said that when they acquired a flat her husband's conduct deteriorated. He brought single men into the flat for parties late at night or he stayed out all night sometimes. This subject suspected that the husband had homosexual tendencies. This does not seem to have constituted a problem on the sexual side of their relationship from the wife's point of view, but its manifestation in other ways, such as the behaviour of the men brought to the flat, upset her.

It is interesting that in nearly all cases the subjects felt that the breakdown was brought about by some action of the husband, for example, his starting to drink heavily or stay out at night. They did not question why the husband began to behave in that particular way. Here the expectations from and the reality of the marriages became clear in that according to our subjects the characteristics which the wife had been unaware of manifested themselves after marriage. For instance, the oldest subject,

although she was going out with her husband for eight years before marriage, and was thirty-five years old at marriage, said her marriage went wrong from the beginning because she had not known about her husband's excessive drinking. Another subject said she became aware of her husband's lack of emotional response through other people saying that it was funny he showed very little feeling and was not protective. He did not go to see her for twenty-four hours after their first baby was born while her brother came immediately. This subject expected her husband to react in a way in which he may not have been capable. She had not noticed until the birth of the first baby and the gradual breakdown started. Other subjects reported that they thought their husbands and themselves agreed on principles, such as the payment of debts, but after marriage the subjects' assumptions proved incorrect, and this led to conflict.

When we took length of courtship into consideration, over half of those who were going out together for long periods, such as 8 years, 5 years and so on found marriage a disappointment and discovered after marriage that their husband was "a different person". One or both may have been on their best behaviour until marriage or the association may not have been sufficiently intimate and complete to bring out the incompatibility. Two of the subjects who were surprised by their husbands' behaviour after marriage had married barmen and only saw them infrequently over a long period, going to films and dances. This was necessary because of the long hours of work of this particular occupation. It seems that it is not the length of any courtship that is important but the level of communication achieved in the time.

Some of our subjects who came from happy homes and expected a similar degree of happiness in their own marriages, married men who came from unhappy or disturbed backgrounds. They had felt sorry for their husbands and had wanted to make life easier for them but it just had not seemed to work out.

Over half the respondents said marriage was not what they

thought it would be like, it was a disappointment and eventually a disaster. Some said they had no pre-conceived ideas and had not thought very much about what married life would be like while a small minority said marriage was what they thought it would be. Of those who gave this last answer and elaborated on it, all said that marriage was only good at the beginning and it had deteriorated later on. When we look at the answers given on the expectations from marriage of our subjects—we find that in a number of cases our subjects said they were not expecting great things but that even their modest hopes were not realised.

Burgess and Wallin state "Development for marriage does not end with marriage; it continues, but it enters into a new and more significant phase. The relationship of the couple, which has survived all previous tests, now faces the supreme one of the activities of family life. In meeting the daily routine as well as the crisis of childbirth, illness, unemployment, etc., the companionship relation is strengthened or weakened".<sup>111</sup> In the cases of our couples a weakening occurred and they were unable to meet the crises as they took place.

The commencement of the breakdown then brings us back to the cause which, from this part of the questionnaire, emphasises the lack of really knowing each other prior to marriage. It is appreciated that no-one can really know someone in the time of a courtship but what was lacking was even a minimum level of compatibility, with an area of adjustment the demands of which it was possible to satisfy. There is evidence that in-laws were responsible for causing conflict and also the husband changing a job and this leading to a different pattern of behaviour. No indication came from the subjects that the arrival of another child caused the breakdown to commence. Because they welcomed the child, their low level of association of events may not have indicated a change at that particular time. As we have pointed out a high number of children and desertion are associated.

<sup>111</sup>E. W. Burgess and P. Wallin: *op. cit.*, p. 418.

### *Drink*

Whenever marital discord is discussed, the problem of the excessive consumption of alcoholic drink inevitably comes up as a factor. The incidence of alcoholism, the high *per capita* consumption of alcohol in Ireland and the problems arising therefrom, are too well known to be further discussed here except for their contribution to the breakdown of our subjects' marriages. Taking the existence of drinking problems for granted, we enquired from our subjects the drinking patterns in their marriages, if consumption was excessive and the effects of this.

Robert Straus, writing on excessive drinking and its relationship to marriage, sums up his discussion by saying "In each case, one must look to refined levels of behaviour and realise that the relationship of excessive drinking to problems of marital association is almost invariably one of multiple joint causation and most rarely one of direct cause and effect".<sup>112</sup> In coming to this conclusion, Straus described existing types of drinkers and gives Bacon's three point thesis (i) that excessive drinking and particularly characteristics which are usually present in the excessive drinker tend to preclude marriage; (ii) that married life and excessive drinking are incompatible; and (iii) that the destruction or disruption of the marital association frequently results in the onset of excessive drinking.<sup>113</sup>

To the neurotic, undersocialised individual, marriage with its severe demands on intimate reciprocal personal relationships and on the sharing of emotional and social needs and gratification, seems most foreboding, repulsive and even dangerous. This type of individual, says Straus, will particularly avoid marriage and, if he should marry, the marital association with its uncompromising demands for giving of the self, will

<sup>112</sup>Robert Straus: "Excessive Drinking and its Relationship to Marriage". *Marriage and Family Living*, Summer 1950, Vol. XII, No. 3.

<sup>113</sup>Selden D. Bacon: "Excessive Drinking and the Institution of the Family" in *Alcohol, Science and Society*. New Haven: Quarterly Journal of Studies in Alcohol, 1945. Lecture 16, pp. 223-238.

most likely prove so intolerable to him that, consciously or unconsciously, he will seek its dissolution.<sup>114</sup>

Speaking on the disturbing effects on the personalities of family members due to the existence of an alcoholic in their midst, J. Ross Eshleman notes that the relationship is not one-way.<sup>115</sup> The family also affects the alcoholic and this author says in contrast to the Straus findings that the very existence of family ties appears to be related to recovery from alcoholism. Eshleman, however, does go on to say when speaking about the wives of alcoholics that there is a high divorce rate among alcoholics and that the majority of women who find themselves married to alcoholics appear to divorce them. Straus also brings evidence to show from his own and Bacon's study that, for instance, while 72 per cent of the general population kept their marriages intact, only 23 per cent of the inebriates had. Also a far higher proportion of the general population (80 per cent) had married compared with 47 per cent of inebriates.<sup>116</sup> When discussing the relationship between drunkenness and desertion, Robert Bell, in his book *Marriage and Family Interaction*,<sup>117</sup> quotes Kephart's extensive researches in Philadelphia as indicating an important relationship to drunkenness on the part of the husband in desertion cases. For 1949, in 2,937 new cases of desertion and non-support 28 per cent involved drunkenness as an alleged causal factor of desertion.<sup>118</sup>

Marsden claims that whether a wife looked beyond her husband's immediate behaviour for deeper causes of marriage breakdown depended on her degree of sophistication and

<sup>114</sup>*Op. cit.*

<sup>115</sup>J. Ross Eshleman: *Perspectives in Marriage and the Family*: Boston, Allyn and Bacon Inc. 1969, pp. 668-9.

<sup>116</sup>S. D. Bacon: "Inebriety, Social Integration and Marriage" *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 1945 and R. Straus "Alcohol and the Homeless Man", *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 7: 360-404, December, 1946.

<sup>117</sup>Robert R. Bell: *Marriage and Family Interaction*. Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1967, p. 460.

<sup>118</sup>William M. Kephart: "Drinking and Marital Disruption", *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, March, 1954, p. 71.

insight or simply on how much she knew of his background.<sup>119</sup>

Turning to our subjects' responses to this question of drink, slightly more than half said they considered drink had been one of the causes of the breakup of their marriage leading eventually to desertion by the husband. Only one subject said that her husband had had treatment in a hospital for alcoholism, and another said that the doctor had recommended it, but her husband had refused to agree. This was in spite of the fact that several of our respondents said their husbands were alcoholics. This seemed to be a blanket term used by the subjects whose husbands had a drink problem.

Less than half of the wives who rated drink as a problem in their marriage drank themselves. Two subjects admitted to a fanatical objection to drink. What we see here is that our subjects, because they did not drink themselves and were in some cases directly opposed to it, regarded their husbands drinking as excessive when it may have been little more than moderate.

We thought that perhaps there might be some association between those who appeared to drink to excess and the number of children in the family, but comparing the mean number of children and the mean number of years married for those with a drink problem, we found very little difference in either variable from the mean total number, so drink did not appear to affect either of these variables.

We asked the respondents who said drink was a problem, if they had any idea why their husbands drank to excess. About two-fifths said they did not know and could find no reason for it. They regarded it as a cause in itself of the breakdown of the marriage. The balance of those who rated drink as a problem in their marriage regarded it as an effect of some other occurrence. These could also be subdivided into (i) effects from outside the marriage and home and (ii) effects from the home situation. A few examples will clarify this further. In what were seen as effects from outside, one subject's husband became

<sup>119</sup>D. Marsden: *op. cit.*, p. 81.



a taxi driver, spending quite an amount of time sitting around awaiting customers, particularly at night. Apparently, it was possible for the group of taximen to obtain alcohol at any time during the night and this subject felt that it was joining this group that started her husband drinking. Bad company, which probably amounts to the same thing as the previous example, was given by others as an outside effect as was an injury to one husband's head while still a child plus the fact of his being illegitimate. The subject who reported this added that her husband's friends bought him drink when he had no money and he was drunk almost every night. In the other two cases the subjects again blamed other people, this time the parents of the husband. One subject told us her husband's mother gave him stout as a child saying that he would never suffer from nervous disorders if he took it then, and the other subject said her husband was brought to pubs by his father from an early age. The last example we will give here is that of a husband whose wife said his environment of poverty, lack of education, and opportunity caused him to become depressed and to drink. She said he had brains but never got an opportunity to use them. He read a great deal, mostly encyclopaedias, and studied the stars. Subject said he was completely out of place in his environment and never fitted in. She felt he was frustrated by lack of opportunity to break out of this poor environment. He also married young, which probably exacerbated his feeling of being trapped.

Examples of those who felt that something in the marriage itself, or in the husband's make up, caused their husbands to drink excessively were, for instance, where one subject said she felt the responsibilities of marriage were too much for her husband and that he should never have married. This particular man was also said to have an inferiority complex and was the only case who fell into the two categories, being the person already mentioned whose mother gave him stout as a child. Another subject felt that her husband started drinking heavily because of the home situation. The couple had sold their own house to return to live with subject's mother and retarded

brother. There was constant conflict between the brother and husband with subject's mother taking the brother's part. Drinking when "things went wrong" at home was a subject's explanation. Another said her husband had an inferiority complex and drink helped him to overcome this and besides he enjoyed drinking anyway.

Considering the above, it could be said that on the problem of drinking the first main division made by the subjects was that some made excuses or gave reasons for their husbands drinking while others felt they did not know the reason or that there was no reason. These last two are different things, it is appreciated, but what we are intending to point up is where a wife tried to find some justification for the excessive drinking and on the other hand where she felt there was none or was not prepared to look for any. This may indicate that a better relationship existed where a wife sought a reason or perhaps may only indicate that the problem was not quite as unbearable since she sought to excuse it. It may also indicate a low level of hostility towards the husband and a higher degree of understanding. One could speculate endlessly on why some women would find excuses for their husbands' behaviour and others not.

If the relationship of excessive drinking to problems of marital association is almost invariably one of multiple joint causation and most rarely one of direct cause and effect, then a small majority of our subjects' marriages could be said to fit into this category. Also, however, if inebriates cannot give to the relationship what is required and consciously or unconsciously seek dissolution, in our study a trend towards this type of finding would seem to be indicated by the fact that so many of our deserting husbands were excessive drinkers.

The objections of the wives to their husbands drinking which they saw as excessive would probably in another country have led them to divorce their husbands. Since there is no divorce (*a vinculo matrimonii*) in the Republic of Ireland, it is not possible for the wives to do this so they had not thought along these lines, but it was clear to us that a change of behaviour was very much desired if not a separation. This does not in any

way contradict the previous paragraph but makes the problem appear as a two-way thing—inebriates cannot form rewarding relationships and because of this their wives find it difficult to tolerate them.

Roughly half of our cases had drunkenness as a serious problem. There is then firm evidence that where there is excessive drinking by the husband, whether it is cause or effect, it is a disruptive factor. It manifests itself as one of the major areas of conflict in the marriages of our subjects.

### *Violence*

In marriage the use of violence can constitute a problem where it is not expected by the wife. Our questions about the incidence of violence were aimed at establishing whether or not this factor was present and if so, was it acceptable to our subjects and not problematic.

Komarovsky finds that "physical aggression is more frequent among the less educated"<sup>120</sup>. Hans Toch assumes that "physical force is a characteristic personal reaction, and that it is invoked by some people with the same consistency that persuasion or retreat, or self-insulation, or humour, or defiance, is employed by others".<sup>121</sup>

Only one subject reported that her husband was often violent both to herself and the children. Another subject said her husband was often violent towards her and sometimes towards the children. Some reported occasional violence to both themselves and the children while for a smaller number the situation was frequent violence towards the subject but never to the children. A similar number reported the husband as being violent sometimes towards her and never towards the children. Almost half reported no violence of any sort having taken place against them in marriage and three-quarters recorded none towards the children. This, taking into account class and background factors, does seem a large proportion. For our

<sup>120</sup>See Komarovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>121</sup>Hans Toch: *Violent Men*: London: Pelican Books, 1972, p. 10.

subjects violence appears to be a more common occurrence in those marriages of a shorter duration and its incidence appears to fall off for those marriages of longer duration (5-8 years) but rises slightly again in the marriages of 9 years plus. (See Table 18).

We thought there might be some association between drink and violence but there was none. In fact the subject who reported that her husband was often violent to herself and her children did not report her husband having a drink problem. Those who were or were not violent could be found in equal distribution between those regarded as excessive drinkers and those without a drinking problem. However, looking at sex and violence we find that twice as many subjects who reported some violence in their marriages reported sexual problems than those with no violence. This might be explained by the withdrawal of sexual favours by the wife leading to violence on the part of the husband. However, on our questionnaire we did not connect the two and this information was not voluntarily given so we cannot be sure if that is the connection.

One subject admitted to attempting to provoke her husband to violence and not succeeding. Her object was to have a charge of assault made against him. It may be that although our subjects did not say so, some of the husbands were provoked to violence.

If we take Komarovsky's point that violence is more frequent among the less educated, it is not really consistent with our findings except that violence did actually take place in some cases. Our group could on the whole be regarded as the "less educated" but only a very small number of the men were violent often. For those who did use violence Toch's assumption would seem a likely explanation, even if the violence was a reaction to provocation, since any one of the retaliations mentioned by him could have been used in answer to this.

Our conclusion here is that violence had no major significance for our subjects. It was a problem for some but not an insurmountable one. Although not acceptable to the subjects it was only problematic for a very small number.

*Action taken by the wife when in difficulty during marriage.*

*Consultation of Agencies*

We were interested in discovering to what agencies our respondents would turn in times of marital conflict. We did not enquire why they went to a particular agency or even whether they thought it had been of assistance. The reason was that we felt it would be too subjective an opinion and perhaps based on whether financial support was given or not or some other criterion which the agency would not regard as its function.

More than half consulted the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children—a welfare agency. About half the subjects sought advice from a priest or clergyman. Some consulted relatives; a few the Gardai; and a very small number contacted a social worker—the subjects said here they would have done so but there was no one available to them. Others called on agencies such as Marriage Guidance Council; Samaritans and Salvation Army. The balance consulted no one.

In some cases the subjects commented on the agencies they had approached. Most of those who consulted the ISPCC commented favourably on its operation. When our subjects asked the advice of a priest or clergyman most reported the contact useless. The dissatisfaction here ranged from comments like "He (the priest) told me I was made to bring souls into the world and must accept it", to subjects who said the priest they consulted spoke to their husbands and did try to help but all to no avail. These marriages were in dire trouble and yet one-fifth of the subjects consulted no one. They did not see any of the available agencies as being of use to them.

We then asked the subjects whether or not they had taken their husbands to court and only about one-third said they had, mostly for cruelty and non-maintenance. Those who had prosecuted their husbands felt it was a useless exercise as even where their husbands had received jail sentences, nothing changed—in fact the situation was worse. It seemed that the action of the wife in taking her husband to court and his

subsequent prosecution and possible sentence gave the husband an excuse for his actions. His attitude was that his wife had let him down, in fact it exacerbated an already poor relationship. On the other hand, one or two husbands behaved well for a while after the Court appearance but very soon reverted to their original objectionable behaviour. A number discussed legal separation. About half of those who discussed it said they felt it was too expensive to pursue while the balance said either their husbands would not agree or laughed at them when they suggested a legal separation.

Our subjects did not for the most part consult agencies to repair their marriages. They only did so when the rupture was serious and very little could have been done anyway. This tallies with the view of the Marriage Counselling Services that their clients come mostly from the middle classes and they are not yet seen as of value or approachable by the working classes.

## SECTION IV

### *After Desertion*

HAVING examined the "Before" and "During" marriage periods, we now turn to the time after desertion and first consider the demographic aspects of this phase in our subjects' lives.

#### *Present Age, Age at Marriage and Duration of Marriage*

The first part of the factual data here is covered by Tables 9 and 10, which give the present age by age at marriage of both husbands and wives. These factors are important to note since they provide information on the likelihood of the presence of dependent children in the home, and also the length of time during which a wife will have to provide for herself and her children. They are also necessary if one wishes to calculate the financial dependency of the deserted wife on statutory benefits, should these be her means of support. The associated question of duration of marriage will indicate the time at which the breakdown in the marriage occurred; the year or years when the problems became insurmountable, at least for one of the parties, and the response to the crisis had been desertion. In this section we shall confine ourselves to establishing present age, age at desertion and duration of marriage, without associating them with, for instance, the existence of dependent children, which we shall consider later. When calculating the duration of the marriages of our subjects we took account of the high degree of recidivism and the problem of calculating exact dates, and decided to take separation date as the date of the first desertion.

Zukerman, Chief Counsel and Executive Secretary of the National Desertion Bureau of New York, studied the ages, religious beliefs, race and length of marriage of deserting

husbands.<sup>122</sup> He then checked his findings with a study carried out in 1904 by the Charity Organisation Society of New York, of 574 cases handled by twenty-six agencies throughout the country and also with another by Charles Zunser of 423 cases handled in 1926 by the National Desertion Bureau. Zukerman's own study was a review of 400 applications for service made to the National Desertion Bureau in the first few months of 1949. He found that in all these studies the majority of desertions took place with husbands aged 35 years or less. However, the next ten years were still what might be termed "critical". Another study by Baber suggests that the median age at desertion is 33 and that two-thirds of desertions occur in the first ten years of marriage.<sup>123</sup>

On the duration of marriage Chester writes: "The stability of a marriage is best measured by its endurance and the cessation of co-habitation is the most significant step in its breakdown."<sup>124</sup> He criticises the reliance on legal durations, which he says misrepresent the facts about marital disruption. Gathering information from the Magistrates Courts of England and Wales, he found that separations reached their peak in the third year of marriage, some two years before the peak of divorces. Almost 40 per cent of the marriages studied were effectively ended in the first quinquennium. Other studies supporting the theory that the first five years is the critical period and the period when marriages are most likely to break up, are those of Mowrer in Chicago and Patterson in Philadelphia.<sup>125</sup> Mowrer's figure was 47 per cent of couples at the Chicago Court of Domestic Relations living together for less than five years and Patterson's was 45 per cent, for cases brought into the Domestic Relations Division of the Municipal Court of Philadelphia.

<sup>122</sup>Jacob T. Zukerman: "A Socio-Legal Approach to Family Desertion". *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. XII, No. 3, Summer, 1950.

<sup>123</sup>Ray E. Baber: *Marriage and the Family*, New York. McGraw Hill Book Company, 1953, pp. 493/4.

<sup>124</sup>Robert Chester: "Current Incidence and trends in marital breakdown", *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, (Sept., 1972) 48, 529-541.

<sup>125</sup>E. W. Mowrer: *Family Disorganisation*, University of Chicago Press, 1927, and S. M. Patterson, *op. cit.*



The 1967 study of Landis and Landis of three groups of marriages (581 married couples, 155 couples undergoing counselling, and 164 divorced people) found that the most serious stress situations tended to occur in the first five years of marriage.<sup>126</sup>

The mean present ages of our subjects are: Husbands 39.7 years and Wives 37.9. Tables 13 and 14 give present age by age at desertion, showing that for both husbands and wives the ages of desertion are mainly concentrated in the 25-34 age group. The mean ages at desertion are 31.2 years in the case of husbands and 29.3 in that of the wives. More than three-quarters of the husbands were under thirty-four years of age at the time the desertion took place.

The peak of the desertions in our study was reached at four years of marriage (see Figure 1), and seventeen of the marriages ended in the first five years. Thirty-three out of the forty marriages studied had ended in the first ten years.

It is interesting that although our sample is non-statistical, yet on age at desertion, our findings are in agreement with those of Zukerman and Baber, the younger age groups and shorter duration of marriage being slightly more pronounced for our group. Also, in that nearly one-quarter of our subjects separated before the fourth anniversary and 40 per cent of the marriages had broken up in the first five years, our results seem to show the same trends as the findings of Chester, Mowrer and Patterson already mentioned. This result would also be in line with the Landis's stress years conclusion. The early years of our subjects' marriages were therefore vital and they did not survive this critical period.

#### *Sources of Income*

The present sources of income were recorded to discover the means of support of the respondents: the total amount of their weekly income and whether in view of this they would be considered "poor".

One-parent families are far more apt to be poor than other

<sup>126</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *op. cit.*, pp. 295/6.

families as studies in the US have shown. For instance, Hadden and Borgatta quote Chilman and Sussman: "Two and a quarter million families in the United States today are composed of a mother and her children. They represent only one-twelfth of all families with children but make up more than a fourth of all that are classed as poor."<sup>127</sup> Rodman asked the question—what does a woman do when she has children by a man and he leaves her? The separation may solve the man's financial problem if that was why he left but what about the woman left with the children?<sup>128</sup> In Trinidad, which was Rodman's field of study, there is a child-shifting pattern which provides a solution to the problem. The woman can turn the care of the children over to a female relative while she takes on the job of minding them financially. This child-shifting pattern serves the function of "sociological fatherhood" by permitting the redistribution of children into households where they can be taken care of while the mother works. This is, of course, an extension from the days of slavery when the master was the "sociological father" and the mother was dependent on the system of slavery rather than upon the child's biological father.

Renne finds that divorced women are less likely to indicate poor health than unhappily married or separated women of the same age.<sup>129</sup> She goes on to say that marriage was associated with better health only when the relationship was satisfactory to the respondent. These findings were on a probability sample of 4,452 households in Alameda County, California.

Eckelaar comments on the seeming contradiction that in Britain a woman who fails to obtain a maintenance order against her husband and relies on supplementary benefits is in

<sup>127</sup>J. K. Hadden and M. L. Borgatta (eds.), *Marriage and the Family*, 1969 Illinois. Peacock, p. 536. See also Paul Glasser and Elizabeth Navarre: "Structural Problems of One-Parent Family", J. Ross Eshleman (ed.), *Perspectives in Marriage and the Family*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1969, p. 655.

<sup>128</sup>Hyman Rodman: *Lower Class Families*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 183.

<sup>129</sup>Karen S. Renne. "Health and Marital Experience in an Urban Population". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 33, No. 2, May, 1971.

a better position than her counterpart who is in receipt of a marginally adequate maintenance payment. State benefits are simpler to collect and more certain.<sup>130</sup> Glasser and Navarre feel that the probability of lower income and lower occupational status for the female headed household are likely to lower the family's social position in a society which bases social status primarily upon these variables.<sup>131</sup>

Of our respondents, over half were receiving the Deserted Wife's Allowance, some were receiving Home Assistance and some were employed. In addition to the Deserted Wife's Allowance or Home Assistance, a number were given financial help by voluntary bodies such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Average income per week amounted to £11.61 for the Deserted Wife with 3.43 children.\* Nothing has been written about the effect of receiving a bare minimum income from several different sources. It is appreciated that a number of people receive incomes from different sources, but it is rather different when one is entirely dependent on receiving an amount of, say, £1 per week from a voluntary organisation to supplement an income of £5 per week from Home Assistance. This Home Assistance payment has to be requested each week and some of our informants had also to accept money from relatives who were not very well off themselves. This dependency was mentioned as a source of constant embarrassment. A few of the subjects actually lived with relatives, either parents or sisters. This meant that their income did not have to cover rent as well as food. They were, however, a minority and most of our subjects had to bear all the expenses of a home from their income. It was not surprising then when we asked about the type of food our subjects ate, very few had meat or vegetables at any kind of regular intervals. Some sausages or mince at the weekends was the most the family could afford with potatoes and bread during the week, and eggs occasionally.

<sup>130</sup>J. Eekelaar, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>131</sup>Paul Glasser and Elizabeth Navarre: *op. cit.*

\*This is a 1972 figure.

Again those who lived with relatives were a great deal better off. In spite of this, a number of the respondents remarked that their health had improved somewhat since the desertion because of the lack of tension in the home. There were others however, who were actually hungry because their outgoings were higher than their income could support. The one advantage was that the income was regular and sure, although it was barely adequate.

A comparison of our findings and those of the studies mentioned, shows that, in terms of actual income coming into the family, our informants were now poorer since their husbands had been in occupation class 5 and in some cases in constant employment. Those dependent on statutory benefits, either Deserted Wife's Allowance or Home Assistance, had an income well below their husbands. The respondents who were employed were slightly better off, but yet not as well off as when their husbands had been supporting. The majority of our subjects did not use Rodman's solution of child shifting, as even those living with relatives took care of the children themselves. It must be said, however, that most of the relatives were too old to take care of a number of young children or were employed themselves. The idea of a redistribution of the children into different households to enable the mother to work was not an attractive one to our subjects and they have found it difficult and even guilt provoking to turn their children over to another's care. Healthwise, although there was less tension, food was of poor quality and scarce so that overall general health was not as good as it had been. None of our informants were receiving maintenance from their husbands but even so, those receiving statutory benefits stressed the advantage of a regular and sure weekly income, as had the wives in Britain that Eckelaar had mentioned.

The majority of our group were at the lower end of the income scale, which is where one-parent families are most likely to be. They had been financially better off when their husbands were supporting them, but a large number were only receiving sporadic support for a number of years before the

desertion took place, so the regular payments they now received meant a great deal to them, in spite of the fact that they were small. Those who were receiving Home Assistance (either because they had been divorced by their husbands and were therefore at the time of interview not entitled to the Deserted Wife's Allowance, or their husband had returned and deserted again, thereby making it necessary for them to go through the six month probationary period once more)\* spoke of the humiliation of having to request payment each week at the Home Assistance Office where there was little privacy and occasionally rudeness from the officer in charge. Some subjects however, spoke of the courtesy and helpfulness of other Home Assistance officers. Because of low income the quality and quantity of food was poor. Those who would be considered middle class in the group were relatively better off than their working class counterparts, but were relatively poorer than they had been when their husbands were supporting. These women were among those employed. There is then a definite drop in income and general standard of living for the deserted woman.

### *Children*

The effects of the desertion by their father on the children of our subjects were not studied in any great detail, since we were concerned primarily with the subjects themselves. We did, however, enquire whether or not any of the children had had to attend Child Guidance Clinics, had appeared in Court either on charges or for non-attendance at school, as a result of the desertion. This information would signify whether or not desertion affects children adversely indicated by anti-social or disturbed behaviour.

Considering some of the research that has been done in the area of the correlation of juvenile delinquency and the broken home, the Gluecks found that broken homes contribute more

\*See previous reference to the recent change in the law in respect of women divorced by their husbands in another state.

than their share to the problem of juvenile delinquency.<sup>132</sup> Using matched samples of delinquent and non-delinquent youngsters the result was that 9 per cent of the delinquents, but only 6 per cent of the non-delinquents had divorced parents. However, homes where one parent had been widowed or where the parents had separated contributed even more significantly to the ranks of the delinquents. The effect on the child is one of the main points argued by those who oppose divorce and those who hold it should be permitted. Instances of the point of view that the child's welfare will suffer if the family is broken up can be defended as can the other view which says that the persistence of division and quarrelling can do a child greater harm than bringing the marriage to an end as already indicated. Nye brought evidence to show that there is less maladjustment among adolescents from broken homes than from unbroken homes which are unhappy.<sup>133</sup> Steigman points out that deserted children have their own problems.<sup>134</sup> They feel inferior to the other children in the neighbourhood because they have no father. Some feel a great loss in their father's absence because they have been very close to him. "The serious psychological consequences for a child who does not have a father to love, imitate, and be loved by, are too well established to require discussion here. The difficulties encountered by the child who thus loses his opportunity of working out the oedipal conflict in a satisfactory manner may subsequently appear as behaviour problems or neurotic symptoms."

In contrasting the effects of desertion and divorce, Kephart argues that, in some ways, desertion is more prejudicial to the interests of children than divorce.<sup>135</sup> Divorcees are free to remarry so effects on children may be only temporary while deserted wives cannot remarry unless they procure a divorce.

<sup>132</sup>Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck: *Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency*. New York, The Commonwealth Fund 1951.

<sup>133</sup>F. Ivan Nye: "Adolescent—Parent Adjustment: Age, Sex, Sibling Number, Broken Homes and Employed Mothers as Variables", *Marriage and Family Living*, 14 November, 1952, pp. 327-32.

<sup>134</sup>Joseph Steigman, "The Deserted Family", *Social Casework*, April, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup>Wm. M. Kephart: *The Family, Society and the Individual*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1961, p. 596.

This is not always possible since many deserters return and desert again many times, so the effects on the children are likely to be long-term. With divorce there is no fear of the return of the husband at any time and of his departure again. Although we are not really concerned here with divorce it is also interesting to note that in Kephart's Philadelphia study, a much larger proportion of desertions than divorces involved minor children—more than 75 per cent of desertion cases compared with 57 per cent of divorce cases. When only minor children were considered, the average number of minor children per desertion was substantially higher than the average number per divorce.

Another disadvantage shared by all the children of one parent families is that referred to by Glasser and Navarre, that the child can only have a relatively undistorted channel of communication if both parents are present. "Whatever the interests, values, and opinions of the remaining parent, the loss of a parent of one sex produces a structural distortion in the communications between the child and the adult world and, since such communication is a factor in the development of the self-image of social skills, and of the image of, the total society, the totality of the child's possible development is also distorted."<sup>136</sup>

About one-third of our subjects reported having had children appear in Court, or attend Child Guidance Clinics. However, when we look closer at this number, only one child, a youth of sixteen, had appeared in Court on a charge—the stealing of a motor car, and only three subjects reported that their children had to attend Child Guidance Clinics as a result of the disturbance in the home. The others who attended Child Guidance Clinics were slow learners, epileptics and mildly mentally handicapped children.

We did, however, check the mean age of the children in our study and found that it was 10.4 years. It may well be that a great number of our children are not yet old enough to manifest delinquent behaviour. If we take attendance at Child Guidance

<sup>136</sup>Paul Glasser and Elizabeth Navarre: *op. cit.*

Clinics as an indicator of disturbance, very few have so far shown signs of disturbance. The effects on a child of a broken home may have been unduly emphasised, since continuous quarrels and tensions affect a child just as unfavourably as the separation of parents. Some of our subjects remarked on this point, saying that the children were afraid of their fathers and some were glad he had gone. Steigman's thesis that deserted children do not have the opportunity to work out their oedipal conflict in a satisfactory manner would also apply to the children of widows or divorcees who do not remarry, so deserted children are not in a special position. In that desertion brings stress because of its uncertainty and lack of legal provisions, we can only agree with Kephart's findings that the interests of children are less well served by desertion than divorce, but we have no evidence to support this theory.

The children of our subjects were not manifesting any delinquent behaviour, and were not showing signs of disturbance. As was pointed out, however, this may well be due to age. The impression was not given by the subjects that the children had suffered unduly by the desertion of their father, except in material ways. As referred to in the sources of income section, some husbands had not been supporting their families for some time prior to the desertion anyway, so that even in material ways, the children were not suffering more by the desertion than they had before it. It may be that if the children are disturbed by the breakdown of their parents' marriage, this will not become obvious until their own marriages, as is evidenced by the number of deserters who came from disturbed homes themselves, a topic which has already been discussed.

#### *Circumstances of the Desertion*

We asked about the circumstances of the desertion as we thought it possible that our subjects might be the wives of emigrants who had just lost touch with them. We also envisaged that the relationship might have been one of continuous conflict ending in flight by the husband. Again there could have been a crisis in the husband's affairs, of which the wife



was not even aware, but which could have precipitated a sudden departure without explanation. The answers here would go to make up a picture of the desertion, what led up to it and how it actually happened.

We found no studies which referred to the actual circumstances in which desertion takes place in the sense we were examining here. Marsden only mentions that in some cases the husband leaves his wife and in others he is evicted by her.<sup>137</sup> Eekelaar defined the various kinds of desertion but goes no further.<sup>138</sup> Dominion describes the kind of situation where one or other spouse makes an effort over many years to obtain from the relationship what is needed, all without avail. It may be tolerated for a long time for the sake of children, religious or other motives but eventually an unbearable situation is reached after years of aridity and one party simply decides to go. This is a general comment, however, and not based on any study undertaken.<sup>139</sup>

Analysing the circumstances of the desertions of our subjects, over half report an amount of serious conflict and warning before the actual desertion. Quarrels and threats of desertion were numerous in this group. Those who said their husbands had left suddenly without trace or apparent warning, realised after the desertion that they had ignored indications of the coming breakup, such as their husbands staying away nights or rumours of having girl friends, or going dancing alone, and had been taken by surprise when the desertion took place. Emigrant desertion, as defined by us, accounted for only one case and here there was warning of the impending breakup.

Our informants did not really think beforehand of the consequences of desertion. The threats seemed to be just part of the general conflict in the home and as we said previously some subjects were relieved when the breakup finally came. There was a fear of return of the husband in some cases and a hope for his return in others. We shall discuss these points

<sup>137</sup>D. Marsden: *op. cit.*

<sup>138</sup>John Eekelaar: *op. cit.*

<sup>139</sup>J. Dominion: *op. cit.*

further later. Most of the circumstances of the desertions pointed to a breakdown of the relationship prior to the desertion.

### *Kin Support*

The importance of kin is too wide an area to be explored here but one question was asked on kin contact and assistance to the deserted wife to see in how many cases members of the family or near relatives assisted. In a large majority of cases the wife's own family were in contact and helped. This assistance was not always financial but was supportive, i.e. visiting and keeping in contact generally. Not quite half of the husband's kin were in touch with the wife and a number of them were regarded as being of assistance or support. As was said when discussing subjects' income, a high proportion stated they would be in a very difficult position without the financial support and accommodation provided by their own families. This was true of the husbands' families also but to a much lesser extent.

### *Accommodation*

Having discussed the influence of accommodation on the quality of marriage in the previous section, we were interested to know if our subjects had changed accommodation since the desertion and if so, why? The picture of the deserted wife living in utterly squalid conditions is the one which usually comes to mind. We found that over half our subjects had changed accommodation. Some did so to be near relatives and others obtained Corporation flats with which they were very pleased. There was one exception here—a subject who had been living in a private house and whose present flat was much less desirable. This seemed to be the only example of the lowering in status of accommodation. Overall, the picture of squalid accommodation conditions did not emerge for our group and there were few complaints. This is not to say that there was no need of improvement, particularly in the social amenities of the areas in which our subjects were living. What

we are saying is that the subjects did not raise accommodation as an issue of importance or a problem to them.

### *Social Life*

The problem of being a solitary parent, particularly a female parent, manifests itself in a society like Ireland which bases most of its social activities on couples and where community sanctions on the behaviour of a lone woman can be strict. The feeling of being a "fifth wheel" on social occasions presents itself for any of the categories of women, widowed, separated or single. Those widowed and separated emphasise, however, that having been part of a couple, it is much more difficult to become a single entity again and the problem is more keenly felt by them.

One or two studies refer to this problem. Glasser and Navarre find that ". . . the solitary parent is likely to be limited in the social ties that are normal channels of communication" and "Social activities, parties, visits to kin, recreational activities, and child-rearing advice are all geared to the married pair."<sup>140</sup> Landis and Landis refer to the necessity for creating a satisfactory social life in a society organised on the basis of couples.<sup>141</sup>

Almost three-quarters of our subjects did make some effort to go out, but the outings were mostly to visit kin. Other activities engaged in on a small scale, included bingo, classes, theatre, films, fashion shows, parish activities, children's play groups and clubs. None of these required a male companion. The subjects did complain, however, about the "fifth wheel" feeling when going out with members of their families, particularly married members. Only four subjects reported having a male friend and only one of this number was cohabiting. Some reported not wishing to go out with men because of what the neighbours might say. Those subjects who said they never went out socially, even with women friends, were either too poor or too depressed to do so.

<sup>140</sup>Paul Glasser and Elizabeth Navarre: *op. cit.*

<sup>141</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis: *op. cit.*

Our subjects are comparable to those to which earlier studies refer, in that they now find themselves on their own and no longer part of a couple. As a couple there was no difficulty for them in going out, but they were now at a loss in the activities which centred around couples.

Although our subjects complained about this aspect of their present life, if we look at their social life during their marriage, we do not find a great deal of socialising as a couple. It is, however, more the feeling of the presence of the husband that is important and the fact of being regarded as part of a couple. When they visit kin or go out socially now, they feel at a loss since all the other women are accompanied by men. On these occasions at least, up to the time of the desertion, their husbands' physical presence was there, even if it was merely a physical presence.

#### *Desire for Remarriage*

It was stated in the earlier part of the study that desertion does not confer the right to remarry but that the deserter may wish to remarry and choose this particular means of separation to do so. The deserted wife, with whom the study is concerned, is not in a position, however, to remarry, and to try to do so would prove very difficult indeed in Ireland. Hampered as she is in most cases by the presence of young children, her mobility is limited as are her opportunities for meeting a suitable partner. In nearly all the cases, the subject was known as a married woman in her neighbourhood and whether this information included the knowledge of the desertion or not, she did not regard herself as a widow or single nor was she so regarded. In some cases the subjects mentioned a kind of biological loyalty to the man by whom they had their children, even though he had deserted them. Even in such cases as where a woman has been divorced by her husband, Church law forbids remarriage while civil law allows it. And if her marriage is annulled by Church law, civil law will prevent her remarrying. While being aware of these limitations on remarriage, it was nevertheless thought useful to ask a question about the

feelings of the respondent in the event of her having an opportunity to remarry.

Over half of the respondents gave a very definite "No" to the question of remarriage. Most were quite emphatic and some were bitter about their experiences. They felt comfortable and serene as they are now. It is interesting to speculate whether or not a remark made by one of the deserting husbands to his wife, when he returned on one occasion to find her in a beautiful new flat with her children, could be true and applicable to those wives who are happier in some ways now that their husbands have gone. The remark was "Oh, you are happy now, you have what you wanted, a home and children". This "nesting" desire, with the exclusion of the husband when he had served his purpose of providing the children, may well have been the real reason for the desertion in these cases. This is speculation and would require further study.

Of those who said they would consider remarriage, this would be conditional on meeting a man prepared to take care of them and their children.

Having asked this question about desire for remarriage and having found that about two-fifths of our subjects were willing to consider the prospect, it was then decided to see whether or not there were any differences in the marriages of those who wished to remarry and those who did not. Firstly, the number of adverse factors were listed. Adverse factors were loosely defined as problems present, seen by the subject and the investigator, for example, drink, violence, sex, expectations not realised, etc. The incidence of these problems is given in Table 15. The Table following (Table 16) gives the number of factors for those desiring to remarry and those not wishing to do so. It can be seen that there were more adverse factors present in the marriages of those who wished to remarry. Following on the table, however, when present age is checked, the mean age of those who wished to remarry is thirty-four years and of those not desiring remarriage is forty-one. Therefore age may be more important than the experiences of marriage. An explanation for the differences in the reporting of adverse

factors, (since the mean number of years since desertion for those desiring remarriage is 6.9 while for those not wishing to remarry is 8.9) may be that because of the shorter time since desertion, those wishing to remarry remember more of their marriage and the factors involved than those deserted for a longer period.

Continuing to contrast these two groups the mean age at marriage of those who did not wish to remarry was older (24 years) than those who wished to remarry (21 years).

We thought perhaps the number of children a woman had might deter her from thoughts of remarriage but the means are 3.06 children for those who wished to remarry and 3.56 for those who did not, so there is no great difference there. Age at desertion was considered and the means were 27 for those desiring remarriage and 31 for those not.

Those subjects then who wished to remarry were younger at their marriage, are younger now, are deserted for a shorter period, were deserted at a younger age, and had more adverse factors present in their marriages. In spite of their experiences they may see marriage more as dependent on the person they marry and that they therefore made a wrong choice on the first occasion but would not do so again. This is in contrast to those who did not wish to remarry who may see marriage as always being an unhappy situation for them, irrespective of whom they might marry. Table 16 and 17 gives some details on these points.

#### *Knowledge of Husband's Whereabouts and Efforts to Contact Him*

Because we stated earlier that the deserter would probably wish to go somewhere his identity was unknown, we were interested in discovering how many of our subjects actually know the present whereabouts of their husbands, and connected to this what efforts they have made to contact them.

About five-eighths have no idea or only a vague idea of where their husbands are but over three-quarters have made efforts to contact them. Of the minority who do know where their husbands are, two are in prison; one husband has recently

died; the remainder are in various other locations in Dublin. Those who have a vague idea believe their husbands to be somewhere in England, the US, Canada and Australia.

Those who tried to contact their husbands used the channels of ISPCC, Salvation Army, and the Gardai, mostly without success. Lack of success was not due to the inefficiency of the agency but to the fact that the deserter had wished to disappear and it was possible for him to do so.

### *Desire for Reunion*

Our subjects were questioned on whether or not they would like their husband to return to them. Apart from the yearly public cost in support to wives deserted by their husbands there is also the emotional tie between husband and wife to consider. If this had been strong before desertion, wives would be more likely to desire reunion, so again we could have a measure of the quality of the marital relationship prior to desertion.

Greenleigh Associates Inc. found in their study of the aid to dependent children programme in Illinois that "unlike the feeling within the family itself, the feeling toward the absent father was generally hostile or indifferent. In less than 20 per cent of the cases where there was an absent father was he mentioned with any positive feeling. In only 15 per cent of the cases had the father made an effort to return. The case analyst felt the possibility of reuniting the family was unlikely in all but 4.5 per cent of the families."<sup>142</sup>

Goode, writing on marital stability, quotes the comments of some of his respondents about their husbands "What's the good of having a husband if he won't support you?" and "When I saw that he wasn't interested in his home any more I decided he was no good."<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup>Greenleigh Associates, Inc., "A Study of the Aid to Dependent Children Program of Cook County, Illinois," in Fowler V. Harper and Jerome H. Skolnick, *Problems of the Family*, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962. pp. 286-293.

<sup>143</sup>William J. Goode: "Economic Factors and Marital Stability". *American Sociological Review*. December, 1951. Volume 16, No. 6, p. 809.

A very large majority in our group had no desire to take their husbands back. One-third of these mentioned the children as the reason for not wanting their husbands to return, saying that the most difficult part of marriage, for example, child-rearing, was now over; that the husband's undependability was bad for the children; that there was another family by another woman involved; that subject hated her husband for leaving his children and so on.

One subject whose husband is in prison will not take him back as she says he continually promises to stop drinking and behave as she feels he should but he never keeps his promises. Another subject, whose husband went to work in England and became involved in a relationship with a woman there, would not now take him back. A subject who did try to restore the marriage found the situation impossible. Her husband had deserted her many times and the relationship has completely broken down. There is a case where the husband wants to return but his wife feels she can no longer accept him back, and in contrast another where a husband who deserted now comes and goes daily in the house, never supports but expects to receive his meals and returns to another woman's house where he spends the rest of the time. The subjects in this group invariably felt a reunion was pointless, that any emotion they had felt had been killed and there was no impetus to try again.

Where the wife is prepared to take her husband back, which is in a minority of cases—one subject, whose husband is in prison, is now awaiting his release and is keeping in touch with him. He deserted and then wrote to her from prison after his committal there. Another subject, who is prepared to take her husband back, has not heard from him since he went to England having committed a violent robbery. The balance of the subjects are in touch with their husbands now and hope that they will return, or are still hoping they will return although their whereabouts are unknown. There were a few subjects who were not quite sure about their reaction to this question and had not made up their minds definitely.



The desire for reunion with the husband did not seem to relate to desire for remarriage, as roughly the same proportion of those who did favour reunion did, or did not, desire to remarry anyway.

We came across the same hostility and indifference as did the investigators in the Greenleigh study. However, there was a higher proportion of women in our study who mentioned their husband with a positive feeling. We do not know in how many cases the husband made an effort to return, but for our group we would be in agreement with the small percentage quoted by the case analyst of those families likely to be united. We hold this view because even where the wives desired reunion, it was highly unlikely to take place except in a tiny minority of cases. The wives hoped their husbands would return but this hope was not based on any reliable grounds.

We found Goode's quotes very similar to views expressed by our subjects when asked would they be prepared to take their husbands back. Such comments are evidence of the hostility or indifference with which the husbands are now regarded.

The conclusion here must be that in a large majority of our cases the marital relationship had completely broken down prior to the desertion. In most cases the husbands have no desire to return, nor have their wives any desire to see them come back.

### *Causes of Desertion*

As we stated at the outset of this study we were interested in the causes of desertion. Here we have deserted wives telling us what they regarded as the cause of their desertion.

There was not a great deal of analytical thought given by our subjects to the causes of the desertion. This is easy to understand since being so closely involved it would be difficult to see clearly what was happening and how and why. Apart from this, our subjects did not have the sophistication to analyse their situation during their marriage or since their desertion. There were exceptions to this, of course. One subject who was quite clear now that the changes in her husband's job—his

promotion and general life-style had been responsible for the desertion. This respondent reported that she had not kept pace with the changes and he subsequently became involved with a woman at his place of work. The reason only became clear a long time after the desertion, and blame was apportioned equally between herself and her husband by this subject.

"It is not easy to determine in any given case just what caused the break-up, just what factors and motivations were most conducive to the end result. Especially in desertion cases is this true, because in most instances the family difficulty comes to the attention of a social agency only after the schism has been created, . . . To get at the real cause in any given situation requires the most careful analyses and evaluation of the psychological and social elements."<sup>144</sup>

Dorothy O'Rourke having studied fifty family deserters in Philadelphia came to a similar conclusion as Zukerman ". . . desertion cannot be explained by any one predominating cause. Sexual dissatisfactions and unemployment do rank high as contributing factors, but it is impossible to say whether even these are basic or whether they themselves are the result of other factors".<sup>145</sup>

Marital cohesiveness and dissolution are discussed by Levinger and he introduces an elementary framework for integrating the determinants of marital durability and divorce. The framework is based on merely two components—attractions toward or repulsions from a relationship, and barriers against its dissolution.<sup>146</sup> The former correspond to Lewin's concept of "driving forces", which are said to drive a person toward a positively valent object or away from a negatively valent one. The latter correspond to Lewin's concept of "restraining forces", which act to restrain a person from leaving any particular relationship or situation.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>144</sup>Jacob T. Zukerman, "A Socio-Legal Approach to Family Desertion", *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. XII, No. 3, p. 84.

<sup>145</sup>Dorothy O'Rourke: "Fifty Family Deserters", *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, Volume 1, Number 4, June 1931.

<sup>146</sup>George Levinger: "Marital Cohesiveness and Dissolution: An Integrative Review", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Volume 27, No. 1, February, 1965.

<sup>147</sup>Kurt Lewin: *Field Theory in Social Science*, New York: Harper, 1951, p. 259.

Thomas speaking of marital failure, would not always dismiss drink and infidelity as mere symptoms. He explains his reason as that this is a superficial view which ignores the important fact that adjustment in marriage is a process, based on the intimate, continued interaction of partners within a more or less clearly defined framework of mutual expectations and goals. Partners may become involved in an "affair" or start drinking for any one of a number of reasons, but once this happens, the whole intricate web of marital interaction is radically modified. The resulting tension and stress tend to further promote the deviant action of the offender and the disintegrating reaction of the spouse.<sup>148</sup>

Landis and Landis say that it is safe to assume that in all marriages, differences of opinion and potential conflict situations will arise in one or more of the areas requiring agreement or co-operation. This is normal. They go on to say that the quality of the couple's overall relationship will be determined by their ways of meeting these situations. How potential conflict situations are resolved and how soon they are resolved are fundamental to the happiness of the marriage partners.<sup>149</sup> There is not a case history cited in Komarovsky's book which does not suggest psychological factors involved in marital strain.<sup>150</sup>

These studies do not give us the subjective views of either party in a marriage but consider the causes of marital breakdown from the overall view of the author from his material. We will, firstly, discuss the views of our subjects in relation to these studies and then take an objective view of what we discovered as the adverse factors present in the marriages we had examined.

A number of our subjects mentioned another woman as being directly responsible for their husband's desertion. In some cases the subjects saw the adultery as their fault for not having accompanied their husbands on outings when asked

<sup>148</sup>John L. Thomas: *op. cit.*, p. 533.

<sup>149</sup>J. T. Landis and M. G. Landis, *op. cit.*, pp. 277/8.

<sup>150</sup>M. Komarovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 343/4.

but in other cases the subject said her husband had met someone else and she did not know why this had happened. A small minority stated they quite simply had no idea why their husband deserted, while a smaller number cited irresponsibility on their husbands' part. A few subjects said their husbands were "loners" and should never have married. Unsuitable employment was mentioned by the same number. Only two subjects mentioned drink as being the direct cause although as will be seen later, it figures prominently as a problem.

The balance of the causes instanced by our subjects were selfishness and indifference; a separation after marriage for a while; husband's parents separated; incompatibility and finally non-support.

Our respondents were inclined to isolate one factor as being actually responsible for the break-up of their marriages and the subsequent desertions. As we mentioned already, there was not a great deal of thought given to the working out of causes. Anyway as Zukerman points out it takes the most careful analysis and evaluation of the psychological and social elements to discover the real cause especially in desertion cases. The causes which many of our subjects chose were probably the most sympathetic ones as far as they were concerned. For instance, the husband's excessive drinking, (although Thomas is careful to point out a warning against regarding it merely as a symptom) shows the wife as a victim of a problem which she cannot control, although the real reason may be some frustration which causes the husband to drink to excess. Citing excessive drinking by the husband, however, puts the wife in a more favourable light. If she truly saw this as the cause, then of course it would be a fact to her, however subjective a view it might be.

The basis on which factors such as drink or violence were rated as problems were sometimes more feelings than fact. For instance, a man might drink very little and yet because of the wife's attitude to drinking, it might constitute a problem. The fact that he drank at all was the divisive and conflict element in the marriage. It might be noted here, of course, that an

intolerance of this sort probably indicates a low threshold of tolerance on the wife's part and it may be that this personality factor would be the strongest element leading to the breakdown and the husband's drinking only a foil to set it off.

The same kind of factors emerge in the American and British studies as in ours, namely drink, adultery, sexual problems and lack of communication as being causes for breakdown or desertion.

Turning to our own analysis of the causes of desertion for our subjects, it was thought useful first to note the adverse factors and compare them with the duration of marriage to see if the factors change in the years. No question of order of importance of factors was asked so our analysis is based on the order of incidence rather than any scale the subjects might have given us. Having said this and since this study is of an exploratory nature, a further study might usefully try to establish a scale of order of importance based on the incidence as found in this study.

We will not differentiate between factors which might also be regarded as symptoms of other problems and not direct causes in themselves, for example, drinking or gambling, and those which might be regarded as causes, for example, in-law problems or disturbed background. Table 18 sets out the number of marriages in which particular adverse factors were present by the duration of marriage periods—Group A “up to 5 years” Group B “5–8 years” and Group C “9 years+” and puts them in order of incidence in the marriages, for example, “Expectations not realised” is present in thirteen out of seventeen marriages which broke up in the first five years. There is a moderate correlation between the factors in this Table, and although a substantial relationship (0.545), not a significant one. The movement of the various factors is, however, interesting—for instance, Adultery moves from the lowest incidence in the first five years to the highest in the 9 years+ group, and “Expectations from Marriage not realised” moves from highest incidence in the early years to second lowest in the later years. This Table might well serve as a guide to those dealing with

marital problems to the type of problems encountered at various times during marriage and what to look for at different stages. This would always be dependent on one bearing in mind the exploratory nature of this particular study.

An effort was made to discover what the subject felt were the adverse traits in her marriage which she thought might have contributed most to the breakdown as distinct from the actual desertion. Taking Tables 18 and 19 together, it will be seen that seven out of the eleven subjects who mentioned "Drink" as the main area of conflict are in the A group. So although "Drink" ranks only fourth in incidence in this group yet seven out of eight of those who mentioned it regarded it as their major problem. Only one of the nine in the B group ranked drink as her major problem, while all three in the C group regarded it as the factor most contributing to the breakdown.

"Irresponsibility" as a major adverse trait was indicated by one in six of the A group; one out of five in the B group and two out of six in the C group. Regarding "Sex" as a problem, two out of six in group A gave it major status; one out of six in group B and one out of five in group C. "Adultery" was not mentioned by any subject in group A; by one out of four in group B and by two out of seven in group C. "Gambling" was cited by only one in three in group B.

"Expectations from marriage not realised" although mentioned by twenty-three subjects was not regarded by any of them as making a major contribution to the breakdown. "Lack of communication" was only mentioned by one subject, whereas twenty-five regarded it as a problem in their marriages. Factors like these two are, of course, very nebulous and are not like "Drink" or "Sex" or even "Irresponsibility" which are linked to specific and, from the wife's point of view, recognisable behaviour. The less definable problems may not even be realised as such and only found when the questions "Was marriage what you thought it would be like?" or "Did you discuss your problems with your husband?" are asked.

Breakdown of marriage is probably most likely to result from the failure of one or both partners to meet the demands of

the situation in which they find themselves. It should be remembered, however, that some couples achieve happiness under circumstances that lead to disruption for others. It seems more likely to be to whom a thing happens than what happens. If we could measure accurately in some way how potentially adaptable couples are, prediction of their success or failure in given situations would be possible. Failing this, we can only describe the factors usually associated with breakdown as we have found them.

Desertion for our subjects is the result of a piling up of adverse situations. These may be common to a lot of marriages which do not result in desertion, but their presence in these particular marriages caused them to end in desertion. It is evident that the personalities of the partners have a great deal to do with it as Komarovsky says. The couple's ability to meet adverse situations common to all marriages, as Landis and Landis tell us, will determine the quality of their overall relationship. If the personality of either members of the couple is unable to cope with problems then this triggers off a series of potential breakdown situations such as excessive drinking, adultery leading eventually to desertion. As our subjects told us, in a number of cases their husbands had come from a disturbed background of some sort. This leads in turn to the establishment of insecure families of their own.

#### *Present Circumstances*

Under this heading, we first enquired from our subjects whether or not they missed anything in their marriages now that desertion had taken place and whether they felt better off now or not. Our object in asking this was to establish from another angle what had been important to our subjects in their marriages. We felt that this would throw light on the marriage relationship and perhaps clarify a little more what actually occurred to cause it to break down.

More than half our subjects said they now missed nothing from their marriage relationship and most of these felt they were better off now. Peace and a certain amount of financial

security were given as the reasons. Some respondents said they could do with more money but at least what they received was sure.

The companionship aspect of marriage was stressed by those who said they missed their husbands. "Someone to talk to"; "miss the complete family life"; "just miss him and the comfort of having him around" were some of the comments. Most of these women also reported feeling worse off now than during marriage. It is most likely that the marriages of these particular respondents were better and their experiences not as unpleasant as those of the other group, some of whom said they had turned against men.

The deserted wives we interviewed had experienced the tragedy of a broken marriage ending in a desertion and now find themselves in what one described rather aptly as "no man's land"—neither married, widowed nor single. Their suggestions were invited as to what they felt could be done to ease their situation or to help them generally.

Changes in the law were the most often mentioned requirement. One subject felt that deserting husbands "get away too easily" and stronger sanctions should be enforced against them. Some suggested imprisonment or enforced support. One respondent made a very good point here. She said that in general the law is structured so that women always need to refer to men. A simple example, a wife needs her husband's permission to get a passport but a husband does not need his wife's permission. When a woman is deserted (or widowed for that matter) she has to play the man's role, without a man's legal status. There were a few who felt legal separation should be made less expensive so that this could be obtained and a figure for maintenance calculated.

The inadequacy of the present allowances came after the changes in the law as most often mentioned. Some subjects suggested both changes in the law and more money. A few proposed a means of solving the money problem—namely, that they should be allowed to work, even part-time and still receive their allowance. To be able to do this, a number



suggested building free nurseries for the children. Another recommendation was that a block of flats be built for deserted wives. Total disapproval for this kind of action was expressed by another subject who felt that grouping deserted wives together in this manner would lose them any anonymity they had.

The general impression given by our subjects was that there was very little being done for them. They felt the community should assist in as many ways as it had power to, particularly in providing crèches, nursery schools and baby-sitting facilities to enable the deserted wife to work and have some kind of social life. Very little emphasis was laid on self-help. The wives felt isolated, stigmatised and lacking in the impetus to help themselves. They had no idea as to how to go about changing their circumstances and need direction in this area.

## SECTION V

### *Marriage Breakdown and the Law in Ireland*

ACTUAL evidence of the existence of the problem of desertion goes back in Europe to as early as the 12th Century when rules were made for the support of wives abandoned by their husbands. In Salonika a treatise called "Koontres Hoagunah" was published in 1651 and this dealt specifically with this problem of desertion.

The only time the law is involved in marriage is in the breakdown situation. Normally the behaviour of married people and families is beyond the law. Unlike business or government agencies whose every move is necessarily governed by law, the surest sign of the impending breakdown of or of the already broken marriage is the involvement of the law.

Legislators in the area of marriage breakdown in Ireland have done almost nothing in the past seventy years. The High Court is still the main agency dealing with marital disputes. It derives its power from the old Church of Ireland ecclesiastical law and therefore has very few powers, only that of divorce (*a mensa et toro*) which maintains the marriage while breaking the relationship between the two people involved. The greatest failing in the law concerning breakdown of marriage in Ireland is the lack of jurisdiction at the District Court level. This court can only deal with maintenance claims. It is appreciated that the machinery required for the long and involved enquiries necessary in separation cases is not available in the District Court. The prohibitive cost of an action in the High Court, however, seems sufficient argument for something to be done about this. Two cases in 1960; three each in 1970 and 1972 (taking these years as examples) are evidence of how few of these divorces (*a mensa et toro*) are granted. There are thirty to forty applications per year but not more than six come to a

court hearing. The cost of the action is very often the reason for not proceeding with it.

Another separation procedure is where both parties agree to sign a deed of separation in the presence of a solicitor. One great disadvantage of this action is that both parties must agree to the separation in the first place, go to the solicitor and then agree between themselves on the terms of the separation. As we mentioned a number of the husbands in this study laughed at their wives when any kind of legal arrangement was mentioned. Co-operation on both sides is needed to have this agreement drawn up, signed and then adhered to.

The law regarding the maintenance responsibilities of husband and wife is out-dated according to James O'Reilly writing on family law in Ireland.<sup>151</sup> Mr. Cooney, Minister for Justice, mentioned his concern about the difficulties or impossibility of a woman getting maintenance from a husband who has gone to England. The Minister was speaking to a meeting of the Irish Association of Civil Liberty on 22 October, 1973 and went on to add that substantial progress had been made in the negotiation of an agreement between this country and Britain for the mutual enforcement in each country of maintenance and affiliation orders made by the courts of the other.<sup>152</sup>

There is, of course, the vexed question here of whether or not a man wishes to support his wife and children at all. If he does not, what is there to be gained by imprisoning him? He possibly loses his job, if he has one, certainly for the time he is imprisoned; his support in prison is a burden on the State and his wife's action engenders to him even greater feelings of antipathy towards her, who he sees as instrumental in his being imprisoned. A method of deduction of maintenance at income source is one used in other countries. Whether it actually works or not has not been fully proved but this is one suggestion for

<sup>151</sup>James O'Reilly: "Family Law in Ireland", *Social Studies*, Volume 2, No. 6, December, 1973.

<sup>152</sup>Patrick Cooney, Minister for Justice, speaking at a meeting of the Irish Association for Civil Liberty on the subject "Dark Corners of the Law", Dublin: 22 October, 1973.

collection of maintenance for deserted wives. There are flaws, although theoretically it an excellent idea. Not all employers would welcome the responsibility and where this system operates in other countries, if a man leaves his job the order is discharged. The whole situation has then to be reconsidered by the court and the lengthy procedures begin again. If a man wants to avoid payment he can simply change jobs as often as necessary or in the Irish case take the boat to Britain.

The system used in Iceland is one where if a man does not support his wife she is paid an amount comparable to what she would normally receive from her husband. The Act now in force dates from 1963. The mother's right to obtain advance payments from the State Social Security Institution is independent of her means. There is machinery available to trace the husband and deduct the amount from his salary. The geographical isolation of Iceland, of course, and its very small population lends itself to the practicability of such a scheme.

Other countries with somewhat similar arrangements are (i) Denmark, where maintenance payments are imposed on a parent. These may be paid in advance by the local authority to the other parent or any other person having the custody of the child or children. The allowances are paid in advance for six-month periods: (ii) Finland's Advance Payment of Maintenance Act came into force on 1st January, 1964. The purpose of the Act is to provide a public guarantee for the maintenance allowance to be paid in respect of a child under 18 years of age either under a court order or an agreement, where the liable person has failed to pay the allowance. The appropriate authority takes steps to recover the payments advanced from the liable person and, where this is unsuccessful, the Exchequer (up to 75 per cent) and the local authority (up to 25 per cent) assume liability for the amount that cannot be recovered. The Act applies to legitimate, illegitimate and adoptive children. The amount of the advance payment per month depends, on the one hand, on the monthly rate of the maintenance allowance and on whether the liable person has paid part of the allowance or nothing at all. On the other hand, the monthly

advance payment is subject to a maximum of 40 mk. per child. The payment is subject to no means test; (iii) The Advance Payment of Maintenance Act 1957 of Norway provides that maintenance allowances payable under a maintenance order or judgment and not paid when due shall be paid by the appropriate authority, and (iv) in Sweden the local child-welfare boards make advance payments of maintenance imposed on persons liable to maintain children under 18 years of age if the liable person fails to meet his obligation. It is the responsibility of the board to try to recover the amounts advanced from the liable person. The amount that cannot be recovered is refunded to the local authority by the central government, up to 75 per cent, the balance being borne by the local authority. The children of divorced parents and unmarried mothers are through such advance payments guaranteed a maintenance corresponding to 40 per cent of the basic amount provided for in the National Insurance Act. The allowance is payable irrespective of whether a maintenance allowance has been fixed and irrespective of the rate of a fixed maintenance allowance.<sup>153</sup>

One great advantage of these schemes is that they take the onus off the wife to initiate proceedings for maintenance, which is what a woman in Ireland and indeed, elsewhere, must do at present. To have to take this step (and even if granted a fixed sum, if it is not paid regularly a woman may have to apply for a summons at intervals) is most distressing and a continuous reminder of the rejection by the man.

Another aspect of desertion cases which requires some legal intervention is the right of the husband to reappear at any time. Some women live in dread of this event, when the husband will temporarily resume his role as head of the household as is his legal right. He more than likely will also continue his previous behaviour pattern, possibly of drunkenness and violence. The jurisdiction of the Court is based on The Married Women (Maintenance in case of Desertion) Act 1886, as amended by 5.18 of the Courts Act 1971. The Court

<sup>153</sup>*Statistical Reports of the Nordic Countries*, No. 22, Oslo, 1971.

under this Act cannot properly protect a wife who has been the victim of physical cruelty as the Act was originally designed to deal with desertion only.

Mr. Cooney also commented at the previously mentioned meeting on the problem of a wife who loses her right to remain in the matrimonial home after her husband deserts her, if the home is in the husband's name. In the case of a Corporation dwelling, there has been some success in the change of the tenant's name to that of the wife. Where private houses are concerned, however, mortgage payment difficulties may arise, or even the situation where the husband has sold the house prior to the desertion and without the wife's knowledge. These and related problems of family law are presently under examination by the Committee of Court Practice and Procedure.\*

#### *Divorce (a vinculo matrimonii)*

We do not propose to discuss divorce at the level of whether or not Ireland needs divorce laws but in a study such as this, it seems necessary to at least mention this particular method of ending the marriage contract. In some countries it is a legal procedure whereas in others it is dealt with as a purely administrative matter.

St Paul was the first to introduce into Western society the concept of the marriage partnership lasting until the death of either party. Prior to that monogamy was practised but with freedom to dissolve the marriage if either party wished. The teaching of St Paul was accepted by the Christian churches. Divorce is still anathema to these churches but on the legal and administrative sides of governments there has been an acceptance of divorce and laws made for its use in most countries.

Ireland still has no provision for divorce with a right of remarriage. Before considering the introduction of divorce, all other possible remedies should be examined. It is more important to look at what the problems are for marriages than to look at divorce as a panacea. People are now living longer and therefore spending a greater length of time together. Education

\*See Addendum.

for living together is what is necessary if Ireland wants to preserve the Christian tradition of monogamous marriage without the right to divorce and remarry. Ireland needs the best marriage guidance services, the best sex education services and the best pre-marriage counselling services (commenced as early in life as possible) because there is no divorce available. Education for marriage and prevention of break-up are the primary considerations. It is far too easy to get married in Ireland considering how difficult it is, to coin a phrase, "to get unmarried". Some balance will have to be introduced.

The right to remarry is the real crux in the question of divorce in Ireland since divorce (*a mensa et toro*) is at least technically available (the qualification being that the parties have sufficient money to finance such proceedings). As we have already stated, many of the younger deserted wives in this study wanted to remarry. Some others we interviewed, although they did not wish to remarry, still said they would like to divorce their husbands as they felt an emotional need to be free of the man through whom they had suffered so much. These women felt that divorce (*a vinculo matrimonii*) would be a more secure way of ensuring that their husbands did not harass them in the future.

#### *Future Research*

Kephart and Monahan tell us that when the Family Courts were established in the US prior to the first World War, and with the growth of public relief there, statistical study of the problem of desertion soon ceased.<sup>154</sup> Only Mowrer's study in Chicago in 1927 and Zukerman's a short time later have appeared and in spite of its importance, the subject has been slowly disappearing from the sociological literature. There are therefore no up-to-date studies of desertion. The difficulty of finding accurate sampling frames is acute even in countries where divorce is possible with desertion as a ground. Only those cases reaching the divorce courts are recorded. Informa-

<sup>154</sup>W. M. Kephart and T. P. Monahan: "Desertion and Divorce in Philadelphia", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 17, No. 6, December, 1952.

tion on desertion in Italy, where no divorce laws existed until recently, was requested through United Nations information service but no data was sent to us.

Again we would reiterate that the small number of cases studied, the inability to secure information on both sides of the problem and the lack of intensive case work, through which a more comprehensive understanding of the family might have been secured, prevent thoroughly valid conclusions. This brings us to methods of studying this problem. If a piece of research (on desertion only) from which valid conclusions could be drawn were to be undertaken, it would be necessary to confine it to those receiving statutory benefits and hope the Department of Social Welfare would be able to devise some method of providing a sampling frame. Perhaps the Department could keep and publish records of each area or on a regional basis. A control group matched for socio-economic status could be chosen to add weight to the conclusions. Several interviews of each respondent would be necessary to establish rapport in this sensitive area and also to give the respondents time to consider and remember situations as they arose. This would require a great deal of co-operation on the parts of the respondents.

One could also use an anthropological approach which would enable the researcher to include any middle, upper-class or working deserted wives. Those not claiming benefit from the state are the people most difficult to contact. A sampling frame here is a total impossibility, so if one wished to include them, the anthropological method would be the only possible way to do so.

The accounts of rising numbers of applicants for the Deserted Wife's Allowance and reports of social workers, priests and the general public, indicate a rising rate of desertion in Ireland. Further study of this question seems essential. The whole field of marital breakdown in Ireland is open to investigation. It is surprising that no attempts have been made to look at this area, since, as we have previously said, Ireland appears to value highly a monogamous divorceless society and therefore needs



more services and assistance for couples in this than other countries if it is to be maintained. Education for marriage is the first need and then counselling services for those whose marriages are in difficulties through psychological or other problems. Since it is so difficult to break a marriage in Ireland, perhaps some means of making it more difficult to contract one could be devised, without interfering with the rights of the individual or encouraging pre-marital conception as some have argued such action would lead to. The stability of the marriages entered into is surely the factor to be considered most. Although the incidence of marriage of girls and of boys under 16 years is minute, yet it is interesting to note that legally the age at marriage is 12 years for girls and 14 years for boys. Even though the Marriage Bill has passed through the Dáil (December 1973) making 16 years the legal age for marriage in the case of both boys and girls, it has not yet become law.

Another proposal would be a random sample of engaged couples willing to be interviewed again after, say, five years of marriage. Expectations and reality could be compared along with how both members of the couple coped with difficulties or whether the marriage actually broke down—the first five years being the period of most strain according to the evidence of other studies carried out (see pages 97 and 98).

## SECTION VI

### *Conclusions*

WE set out with the objectives of (i) studying the marital breakdown situation which led some men to choose desertion as a solution and (ii) studying the aetiology of breakdown in these particular cases.

Taking the first point, there are many things to be said about the situation of the man in a desertion case. To speculate for a while, one could say that in any relationship the easiest thing to do when difficulties arise is to run away. Desertion or running away can be regarded as possibly an impermanent solution. One can always go back, or anyway it is not so permanent a step as legal separation. It may be then that a man who deserts his wife and family could just need a breathing space. To a wife who has been putting up with constant drunkenness and other problems, this might appear far too sympathetic an explanation, particularly when her husband returns and after many promises of future good behaviour reverts very soon to his former pattern. It is here that one wonders, could help be provided? If a man returns to his family and gives proof in the first few days of a change, then there must be some force acting on him, within the home, for him to revert to unacceptable behaviour again after a short time. The pressure of a close relationship; of the heavy responsibility of a wife and children or many unknown psychological problems which this man may have, seem to be contributing to his inability to sustain his behaviour at a level tolerable to his family. The situation again becomes extremely difficult and he deserts once more. The psychological needs of either partner may not be met by the other.

Particular problems are found insoluble by particular people. To run away from the situation seems to be seen by these

deserters as a solution for them. However, having only one side of the story we have not a complete account and therefore cannot bring into relief the husbands' attitudes. What does marriage mean to these deserters? Is it a relationship which when no longer personally rewarding is terminable? We have no information on how the deserters felt.

There is then the desertion for "another woman". It may well be that the first marriage was a mistake, because of youth or pre-marital pregnancy or any other adverse factor. The deserter may see his opportunity for a happy relationship with another woman. This thinking might be in line with that of those deserted who wished to marry again. We had speculated there that they were not against marriage *per se* but just felt their choice of partner had been wrong. Now they were likely to choose a more suitable partner, if given the opportunity to do so. This might also apply in the case of the deserters. However, again we have no proof that this is so.

There were the cases too in our study where a man may have felt "on the outside" of the wife and children circle. He was the provider and nothing more. Even in the United States where changing patterns of marriage has put much more emphasis on the personal relationship, women see their husband's most important role as that of breadwinner not of husband or father.<sup>155</sup>

An advance in status, usually by the husband, which takes him into circles beyond the talent and outlook of his partner can become a reason for desertion. In one or two of the desertions we studied this was the case. Again on the evidence of social workers, priests and marriage counsellors this is a situation which arises with increasing frequency in Ireland in the middle-class sector. With a rise in standards of living and mobility of labour, a man who has married at a young age may find himself rising in status in his work and finding his wife who was suitable at his first level now a cumbersome embarrassment.

<sup>155</sup>See: Helena Z. Lopata: *Occupation Housewife*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

One of the greatest advantages for Irish men wishing to leave their wives and families without any legal settlement is the proximity of Great Britain. Access is completely free and no identification is required. This is the position at the moment and probably will be for a long time to come, unless the substantial progress in negotiation of an agreement in this area, mentioned by Mr Cooney, becomes a reality.

To turn to the aetiology of breakdown, over and above all the other considerations are the broader societal implications. Desertions represent broken families and these broken families must be seen as an index of social disorganisation. As Kephart remarks "In a very real sense, desertion implies failure: failure on the part of the individual to fulfil his marital and familial obligations, and failure on the part of society to impart those values which make for an integrated and self-sustaining family system".<sup>156</sup>

In this study, however, we have gained only a limited insight into the aetiology of breakdown. It seems that as many questions have been raised as have been answered. We have been able to pinpoint the main areas of conflict for our couples but not really what we felt were the exact causes of breakdown leading to desertion. Taking, say, drink and adultery, there is no doubt that these factors are highly disruptive, but were the men of our study any worse in their drinking habits or less faithful than others of their peers who did not separate?

Thomas tells us that his hypothesis, that religious beliefs will be reflected in the efforts made by Catholics to maintain their marriages, has been confirmed by his findings.<sup>157</sup> It is probably true that in most Irish marriages, efforts are made to maintain the marriage since the great majority of people in the Republic of Ireland are Catholics. Thomas makes another point however, which would also seem valid for Irish marriages, and that is that secular attitudes were much in evidence and while most Catholics acknowledge that a valid marriage is indissoluble, a substantial number fail to recognise the implications of this

<sup>156</sup>William M. Kephart: *op. cit.*, p. 599.

<sup>157</sup>John L. Thomas: *op. cit.*, p. 539.

belief for marriage preparation, the selection of a partner, or the will to succeed in marriage. Our subjects, for instance, seemed to believe in the "happy-ever-after" ending. Since there is no such thing as a marriage that is free from conflict of some kind, the tolerance thresholds of our subjects and their husbands may have been lower than those in the population who do not separate, even though they encounter difficulties in marriage.

Examination of the unfavourable factors involved in the marriage suggests that desertion is most likely to be the result of a piling up of adverse situations. Although our subjects may have seen one particular event or problem as being the nub of breakdown and eventual desertion, very often they chose to blame what might be termed a cause or effect factor like drink, leaving a doubt as to whether something else—perhaps even an unknown element—had been the real cause. The most satisfactory explanation one can arrive at then is that of adverse traits and factors, common to a lot of marriages, being present but their presence in these particular marriages causing the marriage to break down. Dorothy O'Rourke<sup>168</sup> drawing her conclusions from a study of fifty deserters says "The search for factors which might have been sufficiently adverse to cause separation revealed that in the majority of cases there was more than one reason for the situation. There were usually conflicts and tensions which consciously or unconsciously permeated the family relationships, and the desertion was merely the most available means of escape. Desertion and separation are thus seen to be the result of an already disrupted family life. They may be considered as the most objective expression of instability, immaturity, or unwillingness to continue to accept the responsibility of a home and family".

Our conclusions could be said to be similar, particularly the point that desertion and separation are seen as the result of an already disrupted family life. There is no question but that in the great majority of our cases, this was so. We have been

<sup>168</sup>*Op. cit.*

unable to work out why it was possible that certain factors when present in particular marriages cause breakdown and in others do not. It seems that the only plausible explanation is one of unknown psychological factors operating. There was certainly evidence of youthful marriage, pre-marital pregnancy, disturbed home background prior to marriage, high fertility rates, and irresponsibility. These coupled with the disappointment that the reality of marriage did not match the expectation, the presence of excessive drinking, sexual problems and adultery are all classic examples of factors present in breakdown situations. The searches for explanations, reasons and causes by our subjects were limited to a large extent to blaming the husband. The relationship, it would seem to us, was unable to support stress from sources such as, false ideas of what marriage would be like, marriage forced by pregnancy, poor sexual relationship, inadequate education for life in general and marriage in particular.

One of the most thorough investigations in Britain into the real circumstances of people since the 19th century is *Families and their Needs* which produces a detailed portrait of both single and two-parent families.<sup>159</sup> Its relevance to this study is in its clearest message—that one-parent families are the best models of the cycle of deprivation: people whose own early environment was unsatisfactory are more likely to have broken marriages and become single parents: *their* children suffer greater deprivation than others.

To make a general comment, deserted wives are very often their own worst enemies. They are emotionally upset and suffer from a feeling of injustice. Some of them are never able to come to terms with their situation and are the *bête noire* of many solicitors. These factors make their plight even more difficult to deal with as financial compensation or support cannot counteract the emotional damage done by desertion of the husband. Although the numbers of deserted wives in the country may not be high, yet the amount of deprivation and suffering

<sup>159</sup>A. Hunt, J. Fox, M. Morgan: *Families and their Needs*. London: Office of Population and Census Surveys, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1973.

endured by this group is very great. The problem is qualitative not quantitative.

To conclude, we now put forward some recommendations. We do not presume that any definitive solution to the problem of desertion or marital breakdown has been suggested or found in this study but it is hoped that it will be helpful to those whose task it is to find solutions. It is in this spirit that these recommendations are put forward.

It is difficult to visualise a perfect system of support and maintenance for the deserted wife. There are many types of systems, all with drawbacks of one kind or another. However, a statutory benefit, such as a Deserted Wife's Allowance, is more useful to a deserted wife than a maintenance order because of the latter's uncertainty. This is a fact which should be recognised more clearly. However, the principle of responsibility to one's offspring if not one's wife, is involved also. Some form of collection from the husband would seem desirable, even should administrative costs in doing this exceed the amount collected. (See previous references to Scandinavian arrangements.) Another suggestion is that in all cases of non-support a state benefit should be given to a woman with children, the onus being on the state to collect from the husband. This frees the wife from the burden of constant application if there are intermittent payments and it would also prevent a husband and wife conspiring to receive an allowance to which they are not entitled. This kind of conspiracy was mentioned to the author by a member of the Department of Social Welfare staff and involves a husband pretending to desert, his wife applying for and receiving a Deserted Wife's Allowance. The husband continues to work or receive unemployment benefit if not working, and supports his family but their income is supplemented by the allowance. Social workers confirmed that this occurred and not infrequently. If there were a system of deduction from wages for support, this abuse would be removed.

The discussion of the law and the deserted wife points to the changes necessary in that area.

Prevention of marital breakdown is the ideal. At present

couples are finding their solutions in desertion, separation or a friction-filled household. A great deal of consideration should be given to preventive measures. As previously mentioned prevention through education is the most rational way to approach the realisation of the ideal. The kind of education necessary is education for parenthood, learning to build good relationships, home economics, and knowledge of the kinds of problems couples face in marriage. Education in schools must be seen in broader terms than at present and a programme launched in the primary schools to include the subjects mentioned above. This programme could be part of lessons on preparation for life. The teachers' training programme would have to be revised accordingly.

After prevention comes assistance for those who still fall through the net of education. We have already spoken about the necessity for a first-class marriage guidance service. This service is at present of a voluntary nature. The state would have to either give a subvention to the existing agencies to enable them to expand or set up an independent non-denominational service of its own. The clients of the existing marriage guidance services are, in the main, middle-class. This is not peculiar to Ireland but occurs in most countries where such services exist. Some means will have to be devised so that working-class people will see services as of value to them. Better publicity is one way and the existence of such services should be made known to children in the "lessons for life" at school. This kind of publicity would cushion any stigma or negative feelings people might feel, in approaching a marriage counsellor, or to the existence of difficulties in their marriages.

We would reiterate that this study is a pointer to further work in the area of marital breakdown. The possibility that the Irish marital breakdown situation has special features needs a more thorough investigation. From this report, however, it seems that the marriages we studied which ended in desertion have very similar characteristics to those in other countries. Whether this would hold in a study of desertion using a random sample is the question now to be answered.



APPENDIX A

TABLES 2—19

TABLE 2: *Distribution of father and father-in-law of husband by status category*

<i>Status category</i>	<i>Father of husband</i>	<i>Father-in-law of husband</i>
1 (highest)	0	1
2	3	0
3	0	3
4	2	0
5	23	19
6	2	8
7	6	9
<i>N</i> =	36*	40
<i>Mean status</i>	5.1	5.4

\*Four of the respondents did not know the occupation of their husbands' fathers.

TABLE 3: *Distribution of father of husband and husband according to status category*

<i>Status category</i>	<i>Actual status</i>	<i>(Derived status) Father of husband</i>
1 (highest)	1	0
2	1	3
3	2	0
4	0	2
5	15	23
6	14	2
7	7	6
<i>N</i> =	40	36*
<i>Mean status</i>	5.4	5.1

Lowest Categories 6 and 7—52.5 per cent of husbands whereas only 22.2 per cent of fathers.

\*Four respondents did not know occupation of their husbands' fathers.

TABLE 4: *Distribution of fathers of wives and wives' occupation before marriage*

<i>Status category</i>	<i>Father of wife</i>	<i>Wife</i>
1	1	0
2	0	0
3	3	1
4	0	3
5	19	9
6	6	16
7	8	9
<i>N</i> =	37†	37*
<i>Mean status</i>	5.3	5.9

\*Three respondents had not been employed prior to marriage.

†Only fathers of respondents who had been employed before marriage were included.

Table 5: *Educational levels*

	<i>Wife</i>	<i>Husband</i>
1. No Standard	16	17
2. Primary Certificate	14	8
3. Vocational	1	7
4. Intermediate Certificate	5	3
5. Leaving Certificate	4	2
6. University or equivalent	0	2
<i>N</i> =	40	39*
<i>Mean Educational Level</i>	2.2	2.3

\*In one of the inter-racial marriages the wife did not know the education standard of her husband.

Table 6: *Groom's educational level related to that of the bride*

<i>Bride's educational level†</i>	<i>Groom's educational level</i>						<i>Total</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	12	0	4	0	0	0	16
2	3	7	2	2	0	0	14
3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
4	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
5	0	1	0	0	1	2	4
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>N</i> =39*	17	8	7	3	2	2	39

\*One wife did not know her husband's educational standard.

†1: School attended, no standard attained; 2: Primary standard; 3: Vocational School; 4: Intermediate Certificate standard; 5: Leaving Certificate Standard; 6: University standard.

Diagonal Ratio: 53.8 per cent  
 Groom higher: 18.0 per cent  
 Groom lower: 28.2 per cent

Table 7: *Position in family*

	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>
Youngest	9	10
Middle	19	17
Eldest	8	9
Only Children	3	4
<i>Siblings</i>		
	<i>Husband</i>	<i>Wife</i>
	5.15	5.07
	<i>N</i> =39*	<i>N</i> =40

\*No information on one husband.

Table 8: Length of courtship by duration of marriage

Length of courtship (years)	Number of marriages	Duration of marriage (years)		
		0-5	5-8	9+
0-1	3	3	0	0
Over 1+1.99	12	4	5	3
„ 2+2.99	13	5	3	5
„ 3+3.99	4	2	2	0
„ 4+4.99	5	2	2	1
„ 5+5.99	2	1	1	0
6 and over	1	0	1	0
<i>Total</i>	40	17	14	9
	$\bar{X}:2.24$	$\bar{X}:2.03$	2.71	1.89
<i>Median</i>	2.62	2.70	2.33	2.70

Table 9: Present age by age at marriage (Grooms)

Present age	Age at marriage						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20-24	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-29	0	4	1	1	0	0	0
30-34	0	4	1	0	0	0	0
35-39	3	6	1	0	0	0	0
40-44	1	3	3	1	0	0	0
45-49	1	1	2	1	0	0	0
50-54	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
55+	0	0	0	2	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	6	18	9	6	0	0	1

$N=40$  Mean: Present Age: 39.7.  
Mean: Age at Marriage: 24.5.

Table 10: *Present age by age at marriage (Brides)*

<i>Present age</i>	<i>Age at marriage</i>				
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
15-19	0	0	0	0	0
20-24	0	0	0	0	0
25-29	4	3	0	0	0
30-34	2	3	3	0	0
35-39	2	7	1	0	0
40-44	1	2	5	0	0
45-49	1	2	1	0	0
50-54	0	1	0	1	0
55+	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Total</i>	10	18	10	1	1

$N=40$  Mean: Present Age: 37.9.  
 Mean: Age at Marriage: 22.7.

Table 11: *Wife's age at marriage related to that of husband*

	<i>Husband's age at marriage</i>				
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+
15-19	5	4	1	0	0
20-24	1	12	1	4	0
25-29	0	2	8	0	0
30-34	0	0	0	0	1
35+	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Total</i>	6	18	10	5	1

Diagonal Ratio = 62.5.

Table 12: *Age of groom relative to age of bride, by groom's actual age at marriage*

<i>Age of groom at marriage</i>	<i>Relative age</i>			<i>N</i>
	<i>Older</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Younger</i>	
Under 20	1	2	3	6
20-24	9	3	6	18
25-29	5	2	3	10
30-34	4	0	1	5
35+	1	0	0	1
	20	7	13	40

Table 13: *Present age of husbands by age at desertion*

<i>Present age</i>	<i>Age at desertion</i>							
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+
20-24	1							
25-29		5						
30-34		4	2					
35-39		5	5					
40-44	0	2	2	3				
45-49	1	1	2	1				
50-54			1	1				
55+				1	1	0	1	1
<i>N=40</i>	2	17	12	6	1	0	1	1

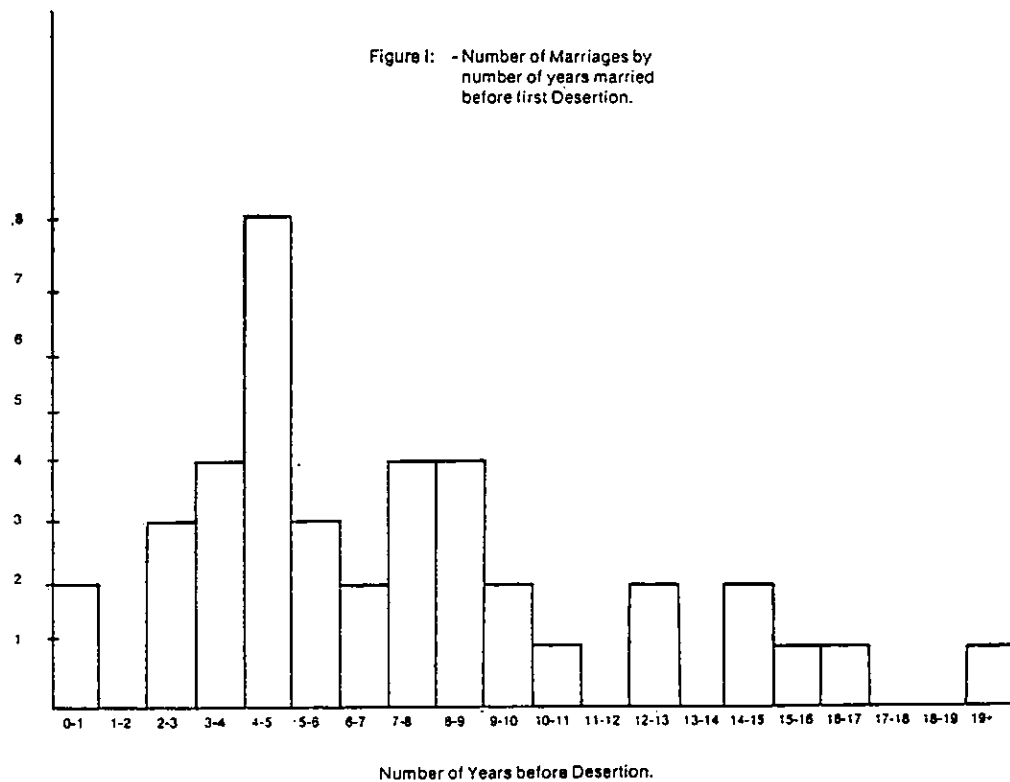
Number of  
Marriages



Table 14: *Present age of wife by age at desertion*

Present age	Age at desertion							
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55+
20-24								
25-29	2	5						
30-34	1	4	3					
35-39		2	7	1				
40-44	2	3	2	1				
45-49	1	1	2					
50-54					1	1		
55+					1	1		
<i>N</i> =40	6	15	14	2	2	1		

Table 15: *Incidence of adverse factors*

Adverse factors	Number of subjects who mentioned each
1. Lack of communication	25
2. Expectations from marriage not realised	23
3. Drink	21
Violence	
4. Sex	19
5. Irresponsibility	17
6. Disturbed background (husband's)	14
7. Pre-marital pregnancy	13
Adultery	
8. Gambling	7
9. Money	6*
10. Difference in nationality	5
Personality problems (husband's)	
11. In-laws	4
Poor consideration on husband's part	
12. Spoiled by relatives	3
Unsettled husband	
Strong attachment to mother	
Accommodation	
Disturbed background (wife's)	
13. Pregnancy desertion	2
14. Change in social status of husband	1

\*There was a cut-off here when compiling Tables 18 and 19 as the incidence was considered too low.

Table 16: *Desire for remarriage or not by number of adverse factors present, present mean age and mean number of years since desertion and mean age at desertion*

	Number of factors involved	Desire to remarry	No desire to remarry	Present mean age (years)		Mean number of years since desertion		Mean age at desertion	
				Desire to remarry	No desire to remarry	Desire to remarry	No desire to remarry	Desire to remarry	No desire to remarry
$N=9$	6-10	6	3	31.0	45.5	5.7	7.7	27.0	30.0
$N=7$	5	3	4	32.7	43.3	4.0	10.0	28.7	33.3
$N=11$	4	4	7	32.3	41.4	8.3	11.0	24.0	30.4
$N=12$	0-3	3	9	40.3	35.9	12.3	7.3	32.0	32.2
<i>Total 39*</i>		16	23	34.1	41.5	6.0	8.9	27.5	31.3

\*One subject gave a "don't know" response.

Table 17: *Mean differences in those wishing to remarry and those not wishing to do so*

	<i>Those wishing to remarry</i>	<i>Those not wishing to remarry</i>
Mean age at marriage	21	24
Mean present age	34	41
Mean number of years since desertion	6.0	8.9
Mean age at desertion	27	31
Number of children	3.06	3.56

Table 18: *Number of marriages in which particular adverse factors were present and order of incidence according to duration of marriage*

<i>Number of years married</i>	<i>Order of incidence of adverse factors</i>								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A. 0-5 years (17 marriages)	Expectations not realised 13	Violence 12	Lack of Communication 11	Drink 8	Disturbed background (husband's) 7	Sex Irresponsibility 6	Pre-marital Pregnancy 5	Gambling 4	Adultery 2
B. 5-8 years (13 marriages)	Drink 9	Lack of Communication 8	Expectations not realised 7	Sex; Disturbed background (husband's) 6	Irresponsibility 5	Violence; Adultery 4	Gambling 3	Pre-marital pregnancy 2	—
C. 9 years + (10 marriages)	Adultery 7	Irresponsibility; Pre-marital pregnancy; Lack of Communication 6	Sex; Violence 5	Drink; Expectations not realised 3	Gambling; Disturbed background (husband's) 1	—	—	—	—

Table 19: *Factors regarded as making a major contribution to breakdown by duration of marriage*

<i>Factors</i>	(a)*	0-5	5-8	9+	(b)*
1. Drink	11	7	1	3	(21)
2. Sex	4	2	1	1	(19)
3. Irresponsibility	4	1	1	2	(17)
†4. Money	4	2	2	—	(6)
5. Adultery	3	—	1	2	(13)
6. Personality defects	3	2	1	—	(5)
†7. In-laws	3	1	2	—	(4)
8. Gambling	1	—	1	—	(7)
9. Lack of communication	1	1	—	—	(25)

\* (a) Number of times mentioned as major contribution to breakdown, and

(b) Number of times mentioned as a problem in the marriage from Table 15.

† These factors do not appear on Table 18 as the incidence is too low.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE AND LETTER

## BEFORE MARRIAGE

Were you born in Dublin?

	Wife	Husband
Yes		
No		
No Answer		

*If not born in Dublin* Were you born elsewhere in Ireland (i.e. the 26 Counties), in Northern Ireland, or in another country?

	Wife	Husband
Elsewhere in 26 counties		
Northern Ireland		
Another country		
No Answer		

Was your birthplace another large city like Dublin, a country town, a village, or right in the country (on a farm, for example)?

	Wife	Husband
Large city like Dublin		
Country town		
A village		
In country, on farm, etc.		
No Answer		

Place where reared (urban/rural)

	Wife	Husband
City		
Town		
Village		
On land		

	Wife	Husband
<i>Parents' Housing</i>		
House (state Corp; Co. Council; own, other)		
Flat (state Corp; Co. Council; own, other)		
Room (state Corp; Co. Council; own, other)		
Caravan (state Corp; Co. Council; own, other)		
<i>Age</i>		
Date of birth		
Age coming to Dublin (if applicable)		
<i>Occupation</i>		
Of Father		
Of Self		
<i>Siblings</i>		
Number Older		
Number Younger		
Number of Sisters		
Number of Brothers		



	Wife	Husband
<i>Education</i>		
No standard (Age Leaving)		
Primary Cert (Age Leaving)		
Vocational (Age Leaving)		
Intermediate Cert (Age Leaving)		
Leaving Cert (Age Leaving)		
University (Age Leaving)		

Did you belong to any sports or social clubs or voluntary organisation before you met your husband?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Was your husband a member of any social club, sports club; voluntary organisation before marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Did you play any games?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Did your husband play any games?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Did you dance much before you were married?

More than once a week ( )

About once a week ( )

About once a month ( )

Less than once a month ( )

Didn't dance at all ( )

Did your husband dance much?

- More than once a week ( )
- About once a week ( )
- About once a month ( )
- Less than once a month ( )
- Didn't dance at all ( )
- Don't know ( )

Did you go to films often before you met your husband?

- More than once a week ( )
- About once a week ( )
- About once a month ( )
- Less than once a month ( )
- Didn't go at all ( )

What other interests had you before your marriage?

---

---

---

Did you have many other serious boy-friends or was your husband the only one you were serious about?

- Many others ( )
- Only one or two others ( )
- Husband only serious one ( )

Do you know did your husband have any serious girl-friends or were you the only one he was serious about?

- Many others ( )
- Only one or two others ( )
- I was the only serious one ( )

Were you ever engaged to anyone else?

- Yes ( )
- No ( )

If 'Yes', why did it end?

---

---

---

Was your husband ever engaged to anyone else?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'Yes' why did it end?

---

---

Were you reared with your parents/husband?

Yes ( )                      Yes ( )

No ( )                        No ( )

If 'No', with whom were *you* reared?

If 'No,' with whom was your *husband* reared?

Are your parents living?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Mother ( )

Father ( )

If deceased when did they die?

---

---

Are your husband's parents living?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Mother ( )

Father ( )

If deceased, when did they die?

---

---

Who was responsible at home for budgeting?

---

---

Do you know in your husband's case?

---

---

---

Before your marriage were you living with your parents?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Was your husband living with his parents before your marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If you were not living with your parents were you living—

In a flat or room ( )

With relatives ( )

In digs ( )

Why were you not living with your parents?

---

---

---

If your husband was not living with his parents was he living—

In a flat or room ( )

With relatives ( )

In digs ( )

Why did he not live with his parents?

---

---

---

Did your parents approve of your marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'No' why not?

---

---

---

If 'Yes' why did they?

---

---

---

Were you particularly attached to one or other of your parents?

Mother ( )

Father ( )

G/m or G/f ( )

No ( )

Whom would you say was head of your household at home?

Father ( )

Mother ( )

Other specify ( )

Did you know or visit his family before your marriage?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Was there any reason for this?

---

---

---

Did he know and visit your family often?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Was there any reason for this?

---

---

---

Where did you meet your husband?

---

---

---

Where did you spend most of your dates?

---

---

---

How long were you "going out" with husband before you married him?

- One month to 6 months ( )
- 2 months to 1 year ( )
- 1 to 2 years ( )
- 2 to 3 years ( )
- 3 years + ( )

Did you take a pre-marriage course?

- Yes ( )
- No ( )

Did you save any money for your marriage?

- As much as possible ( )
- A little ( )
- None ( )

Did your husband save any money for your marriage?

- As much as possible ( )
- A little ( )
- None ( )

Did you talk about plans for a family and life together?

---

---

Did you have plans for a place for yourselves to live before you got married?

- Mortgage on a house ( )
  - Hoped to save after marriage for house ( )
  - Intended to live permanently in flat* ( )
  - Hoped to get a corporation house/flat ( )
  - No plans ( )
  - Other (specify)
- 
-

If living at home were you:

- Very sorry to leave ( )
- Very pleased to leave ( )
- Something in between ( )

Was your husband in constant employment before marriage:

- Constantly employed ( )
- Casually employed ( )
- Mostly unemployed ( )
- Unemployed all the time ( )

What would you say most people think are the things necessary for a happy marriage?

---

---

Would you agree with those views?

---

---

Why do you think men get married?

---

---

Would you say that was the reason your husband married?

---

---

How did you feel about getting married at that time?

- Very happy, no doubts ( )
- Reasonably happy ( )
- Had serious doubts but thought it would work out ( )
- Didn't think at all ( )

Do you think that most people think more of a married woman than a single one?

- Yes ( )
- No ( )
- Don't know ( )

If 'yes' or 'no', why do you think this is so?

---

---

Did you like the idea of being Mrs Blank?

---

---

Do you think most women want to be married?

---

---

What about your girl friends, were they all married before you?

All ( )

Some ( )

I was the first ( )

Don't know ( )

Would you have been worried about not getting married?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Don't know ( )

If 'Yes' why?

---

---

If 'No' why?

---

---

Did you do much reading?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'Yes', what sort of things did you read?

Magazines (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Books (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you think that these stories reflected what life is really like?

---

---

---



## DURING MARRIAGE

At what age did you marry?

\_\_\_\_\_years

No Answer\_\_\_\_\_

At what age did your husband marry?

\_\_\_\_\_years

No Answer\_\_\_\_\_

Were you both of same religion?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Where did you live when you married first?

On our own ( )

With my parents ( )

With his parents ( )

With other relatives ( )

If living with either parents, how did you get on.

---

---

---

If on your own was this:

Room ( )

Flat ( )

House ( )

Caravan ( )

Other (specify)

---

---

---

Did you remain in this accommodation all during your marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'No' what other accommodation did you have? (Tick more than one if relevant)

With my parents ( )

With his parents ( )

With other relatives ( )

Room on our own ( )

Flat on our own ( )

House on our own ( )

Caravan on our own ( )

Other (specify)

---

---

---

---

How come, you moved to this accommodation?

---

---

---

What was the longest time you spent during your marriage in any one accommodation?

1 to 3 months ( )

4 to 6 months ( )

7 to 12 months ( )

1 to 2 years ( )

2+ ( )

Did you pay rent?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'Yes' was your rent on the basis?

Weekly ( )

Fortnightly ( )

Monthly ( )

Did your rent get into arrears?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Did you work after your marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'Yes' why did you?

Needed the money ( )

For interest ( )

Other (specify)

---

---

---

---

How many children did you have?

Boys \_\_\_\_\_

Girls \_\_\_\_\_

How many are still alive?

\_\_\_\_\_

Children	Age

How many pregnancies did you have ending before full time?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

How were you after the birth of your babies Were you very ill or anxious or did you take long to recover?

---

---

---

---

Were the children important to your husband?

Important ( )

Didn't matter one way or other ( )

Not important at all ( )

Did your life change and in what way after children born?

---

---

---

Did your husband help with the children?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Did you both agree on expectations for your children?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'No', what were your differences?

---

---

---

Did you enjoy the physical side of your relationship?

Always ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Some people say sex is very important in marriage and others say it is not. What do you think?

---

---

---

Were you pregnant when you married?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If 'Yes' were you planning to marry before you became pregnant or was it the reason for you deciding to get married?

Planning to marry anyway ( )

Reason for marriage at that time ( )

When did you feel things started to "go wrong"?

From the beginning of marriage ( )

After —'nth child born ( )

Other (specify) ( )

---

---

---

What do you think brought this about?

---

---

---

---

Was marriage what you thought it would be like?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Didn't have any preconceived notions ( )

If 'No' in what way different?

---

---

---

Did your idea of your husband change during your marriage?

Yes ( )

No ( )

In what way, if "Yes"?

---

---

---

If "No" what had your thought of him?

---

---

---

Did you go out together after marriage?

(a) As much as before ( )

(b) Less than before ( )

(c) Never after marriage ( )

If (a) how did you manage that?

---

---

---

If (b) or (c) why was this?

---

---

---

What was your husband's occupation during marriage?

---

Was your husband ever unemployed during your marriage?

All the time ( )

Most of the time ( )

About half the time ( )

Only sometimes ( )

Very seldom ( )

Never ( )

Did your husband tell you how much he earned?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "Yes", did he give you a reasonable amount in your opinion to run the house?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "No" did he give you a reasonable amount in your opinion to run the house?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Did he increase your allowance with rises or when children born?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Would you say you had disagreements about money?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Did you discuss your problems with your husband? Such as family, children and housekeeping.

---

---

---

What did you disagree about mainly?

---

---

---

Was your husband violent to you?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Did he ever use violence towards the children?

Often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Never ( )

Did you ever take your husband to Court?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "Yes", for what?

Cruelty ( )

Non-maintenance ( )

Other (specify)

---

---

---

Did you at any time during your marriage consult any outside agency about your problems?

Priest or clergyman ( )

Relatives ( )

Gardai ( )

Social worker (which one?) ( )

ISPCC ( )

Other (specify) ( )

---

---

---

Did you discuss separation?

Yes ( )

No ( )

1: "Yes" why did you not pursue it?

Too expensive ( )

Other reason (specify)

---

---

---

People say gambling and drink are causes of break-ups in marriages, would you agree with that?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Do you both drink?

Yes ( )

Yes ( )

No ( )

No ( )

Self ( )

Husband ( )

Would you say drink was a problem in your marriage?

---

---

---

Have you any idea why your husband drank to excess (if applicable)?

---

---

---



Have you any idea why your husband gambled to excess (if applicable)?

---

---

---

And what about gambling? (Dogs and horses). Did you or your husband gamble?

Yes ( )	Yes ( )
No ( )	No ( )
Self ( )	Husband ( )

Would you say gambling was a problem in your marriage?

---

---

---

Would you say your husband's drinking and/or gambling habits changed after marriage?

Increased	( )
Remained same	( )
Reduced	( )
Reduced at first but later increased	( )

During your marriage did you live outside Dublin for any length of time (apart from holidays)?

Yes ( )
No ( )

If "Yes", where?

Elsewhere in Ireland ( )
Britain ( )
US ( )
Other (specify)

---

---

---

## AFTER DESERTION

How many years were you married before desertion?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 !

Present source of income?

Deserted Wife's Allowance ( )  
 Employment ( )  
 Home Assistance ( )  
 Relatives assisting (his or yours) ( )  
 Other (specify)

---

Total amount of income per week?

Deserted Wife's Allowance ( )  
 Home Assistance ( )  
 Employment ( )  
 Relatives ( )  
 Children's Allowances ( )

If employed—what kind of employment?

What did you have for dinner today? Tick all applicable.

Meat ( )  
 Vegetable ( )  
 Potatoes ( )  
 Bread ( )  
 Milk ( )  
 Fruit ( )

Where are your children at present?

<i>Child</i>	<i>Where</i>

Have any of your children appeared in Court on any of the following?

School Attendance ( )  
Offences ( )  
Never in Court ( )

Do any of your children attend Child Guidance Clinics?

Yes ( )  
No ( )

If "Yes", how many?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Do any members of your family keep in touch with you?

Mother ( )  
Father ( )  
Sisters ( )  
Brothers ( )  
Other relatives ( )  
No relatives ( )  
No they don't keep in touch ( )

Does your husband's family keep in touch with you?

Mother ( )  
Father ( )  
Sisters ( )  
Brothers ( )  
Other relatives ( )  
No relatives ( )  
No they don't keep in touch ( )

Are you living in the same accommodation now as before desertion?

Yes ( )  
No ( )

If your family keep in touch are they a help to you (not necessarily financial)?

Yes ( )  
No ( )

If "No", why not?

---

---

If your husband's family keep in touch, are they a help to you  
(not necessarily financial)

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "No", why not?

---

---

Did you go out in past month?

<i>Where</i>	<i>With Whom</i>

Do you watch T.V. at home often?

Very often ( )

Sometimes ( )

Haven't got a T.V. ( )

What in your view was the reason for desertion?

---

---

If you could get a divorce, would you like to marry again?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Do you know where your husband is?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Have you made any effort to contact your husband?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "Yes", please give details

---

---

---

If "No", is there any particular reason why not?

---

---

---

Would you take your husband back if he wanted to come?

Yes ( )

No ( )

If "Yes", why?

---

---

---

If "No", why?

---

---

---

What were the circumstances of the desertion? Did your husband-

Go away to get work and you just drifted apart ( )

Left suddenly without trace ( )

Left after numerous quarrels and threats ( )

Other (specify)

---

---

---

What in your view are the most important things to make a happy marriage?

---

---

---

Why do you think it happened to your marriage?

---

---

---

I would like to know what you think of the situation of the deserted wife, what could be done--and what are your general views of the causes of desertion.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Do you miss anything in particular now?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Are you better or worse off now, not necessarily financially?

Yes (    )

No (    )

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE

4 Burlington Road, Dublin 4.

Dear

As a social scientist I am proposing to engage in a serious study of women whose husbands no longer live in the same house and have ceased to support them. There is, as you can imagine, great difficulty in contacting these women and I wonder if I could approach you with a view to discussing the possibility of contacting any women in your parish in this sad position. Absolute confidentiality is guaranteed and names will only be used by me for contacting purposes. I am solely responsible for the study and shall be doing all the interviewing personally. No other individual or individuals will be involved at the name stage.

I shall be happy to give you full details of the kind of information I am seeking and would be most grateful for an opportunity to discuss this with you if you would consent to do so.

Should you be willing, if you could please suggest a time and date convenient for you, I shall be happy to call to see you.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,  
Kathleen O'Higgins (Miss)  
B.Soc.Sc.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Books*

- BELL, Robert R: *Marriage and Family Interaction*. Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1967.
- BELL, Norman W. and VOGEL, Ezra F. (Eds.): *The Family*. New York: The Free Press. London: Collier Macmillan, 1968.
- BERNARD, Jessie: *The Future of Marriage*. London: The Souvenir Press, 1972.
- BOTT, Elizabeth: *Family and Social Network*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1957.
- BURGESS, Ernest W. and BOGUE, Donald J. (Eds.): *Contributions to Urban Sociology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- BURGESS, Ernest W. and COTTRELL, E: *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*. New York: Prentice Hall International, 1939.
- BURGESS, Ernest W. & WALLIN, Paul: *Engagement and Marriage*. New Jersey: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1953.
- CHRISTENSEN, Harold T. (Ed.): *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1964.
- CONNERY, D. S.: *The Irish*. Cork: The Mercier Press, 1970.
- DOMINON, Jack: *Marital Breakdown*. London, Pelican Books, 1968
- EKELAAR, John: *Family Security and Family Breakdown*. London: Penguin Books, 1971.
- ESHLEMAN, J. ROSS (Ed.): *Perspectives in Marriage and the Family*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969.
- GEORGE, Victor and WILDING, Paul: *Motherless Families*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972
- GLICK, Paul C.: *American Families*. New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1957.
- GOODE, W. J.: *After Divorce*. New York: The Free Press, 1956.
- GORER, Geoffrey: *Sex and Marriage in England Today*. London: Nelson, 1971.
- HADDEN, J. K. and BORGATTA, Marie L. (Eds.): *Marriage and the Family*. Illinois: F. E. Peacock Publishers Inc., 1969.
- HART, Hornell: *The Science of Social Relations*. New York, 1927.
- HEIMLER, Eugenc: *Mental Illness and Social Work*. London, Pelican Books, 1967.
- HUMPHREYS, A. J.: *New Dubliners*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- ISHWAREN, K. and MOGEY, John (Eds.): *Family & Marriage*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963.
- KEPHART, W. M.: *The Family, Society and the Individual*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1966.



- KOMAROVSKY, Mirra: *Blue Collar Marriage*. New York: Random House Inc., 1962.
- KRIESBERG, Louis: *Mothers in Poverty*. Chicago: Aldine Press, 1970.
- LANDIS, J. T. and LANDIS, M. G.: *Building a Successful Marriage*. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968.
- LESLIE, G.: *The Family in Social Context*. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- LOPATA, Helena Z.: *Occupation Housewife*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- MARSDEN, Dennis: *Mothers Alone*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1969.
- MOSER, C. A. and KALTON, G.: *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1958.
- NYE, F. Ivan and HOFFMAN, Lois W., (Eds.): *The Employed Mother in America*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1963.
- O' CINNEIDE, Seamus: *A Law for the Poor*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1970.
- OPPENHEIM, A. N.: *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*. London: Heinemann, 1966.
- PHILP, A. F.: *Family Failure*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1963.
- POPENOE, Paul: *Modern Marriage*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940.
- RODMAN, Hyman: *Lower Class Families*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- ROHAN, Dorinc: *Marriage—Irish Style*. Cork: Mercier Press, 1970.
- SELITZ, C., JAHODA, M., DEUTSCH, M., COOK, S. W.: *Research Methods in Social Relations*. London: Methuen & Co., 1965.
- SLATER, E. and WOODSIDE, M.: *Patterns of Marriage*. London: Cassell, 1951.
- WALLER, W. and HILL, R.: *The Family—a Dynamic Interpretation*. London: Dryden Press, 1951.
- WELLS, Alan.: *Social Institutions*. London: Heinemann, 1970.
- WINCH, R. F. and GOODMAN, L. W. (Eds.): *Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1953.
- WYNN, Margaret: *Fatherless Families*.
- ZIMMERMANN, Carl: *The Present Crisis—Marriage and Family*. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956.

### *Journals*

- Marriage and Family Living*—Volumes 12 and 20.
- American Sociological Review*—Volumes 16, No. 6; 17, No. 6; and 20, No. 4.
- Journal of Marriage and the Family*—Volumes 27, No. 1; and 33, No. 2.
- British Journal of Psychiatry*—Volume 110, No. 463.
- Population*—Numéro spécial—juin 1971.
- Smith College Studies in Social Work*. Volume 1, No. 4.

*Reports*

Royal Commission (British) on Marriage and Divorce. Report 1951-55. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956.

United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Marriages: Trends and Characteristics in the U.S., Series 21, No. 21.

