2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

With the biological maturity that comes at puberty, a new development begins in the affectional needs of the individual. The mature sex glands start pouring hormones into the blood stream. These hormones not only cause individuals to develop the physical characteristics of their sex, but they also stimulate the desire for a different and more mature type of affectional response. The young person’s attention now begins to turn to members of the opposite sex outside the immediate family. Normally, interests and activities begin to be centered around boy-girl relationships.

During the teen-age period, then, the young person is going through a period of transition from a family group which for years has satisfied his emotional needs. The family group no longer meets all basic needs and the drive for intimate response forces young people along the road to intimate response forces young people along the road to matrimony. In marriage their basic sex urges are satisfied. Normally, they decide later on that their lives are still not complete and they begin to desire children. Thus the cycle goes on as a new family is started and the “affectional stream” continues its course in the babies of the new family.

Occasionally, happily married couples declare that their love experience was one in which both fell desperately in love at sight. What actually happened in such cases was that the couple experienced strong mutual attraction at first sight,
and upon getting acquainted found that they had many things in common, such as similar beliefs, attitudes, social standards, and tastes. These common interests made it possible for them continue an association which grew into love and a happy marriage. Some of these couples do not know at what point in their association they passed the phase of purely sexual attraction and progressed into a relationship enriched by other elements necessary to love.

The cases of “love at first sight” that do not end in happy marriage are probably far more numerous than those that do. They receive less attention, however, for when the affair turns out to be a passing thing those involved forget that it was “love at first sight” and relegate it to its place with other short-lived infatuations. In other words, the emotional response was not love; the elements necessary for the growth of love were not present.

Love which leads to happy marriage may begin with a physical attraction that impels a couple to seek association with each other. That is only the starting point. Necessary to the development of love is the discovery of mutual interests, enjoyment of each other’s company, a certain measure of agreement of life goals and values, and the absence of personality traits that cause irritation or quarrels between the two. When all the necessary elements are present, the couple usually finds that have are “in love,” and logically they begin to consider marriage.

Other factors also contribute to the decision to marry. The contributing factors are so interrelated that it would hardly be possible to say of any marriage, “For this one reason they married”. Most people either are, or believe themselves t
be, in love when they marry. One or both may be aware of other motives entering into the decision, but they would usually find it difficult to assign exact ratings of relative importance to the different reasons prompting them to marry.

A strong force compelling many people to marry is social expectancy. Our society has been set up and organized on the assumption that people will marry and establish families. It is recognized as the normal thing to do. Society looks askance at those who do not marry. In Puritan New England the unmarried were required either to live with their families or with some respectable family who could vouch for their behavior. Additional taxes have been used in modern times to force people into marriage. The more important factor is, without doubt, the thinking of the group about those who do not marry. It is assumed that all women would like to marry and that if they do not it is because they have not had the opportunity. When a woman fails to marry, the neighbors explain it in different ways; she is homely; she is too aggressive in trying to get a man; she is too efficient; she drives men away; or she doesn’t attract men. An awareness of the attitudes directed toward the spinster forces into marriage many women who would not marry is the position of the single woman were comparable to that of the married woman. Many marry in self-defense, to demonstrate their normality, and not because of intense love feelings.

An unattractive girl, doomed to spinsterhood in her own community, went to the city and there met a man whom she married. Soon after the marriage her husband was arrested; she discovered that he had a criminal record. She had also
contracted a venereal disease from him. She secured a divorce and returned to her home community. When a friend tried to commiserate with her over her unfortunate marriage, she replied, “oh, no. I proved that I could get married. It is much more comfortable to be a divorcée than to be a spinster. I’ll never be called an old maid now.” This is an extreme case, but it illustrates the force of social pressure as an impellent toward marriage.

After people have left home and are “on their own,” many are inclined to considered marriage more seriously because they feel alone in the world. Their friends are married and they are conscious of their lack of any permanent ties. One wife who had been married 15 years summed up her experience in this way, “I did not marry for love or for money. The man loved me and had many of the expected qualifications. We belonged to the same church and our families approved and encouraged the match. I not only did not love him, but in a physical sense he was unattractive to me. Yet being lonely, away from home, and with no close friends, I decided it might be a good thing to help establish the home which both of us seemed to want.”

Girls who come from homes in which they find living unpleasant may use marriage as an escape. If they feel that they have to work too hard or that fact with the parents, marriage may seem to be the only release from an unpleasant environment. Other girls who are working outside the home supporting themselves may find their work monotonous and also look to marriage as an escape. Girls who have been trained for a career may find that the career is less
stimulating and involves more drudgery than they had anticipated. For these people marriage may seem attractive as a way of gaining economic support.

Many who go into marriage as an escape from some other situation become disillusioned when they find that marriage also requires work and self-discipline. If their dissatisfaction with the former environment was due to faults within themselves, they will not be any better satisfied with marriage. It is possible, however, even for the girl who marries as an escape to make a fortunate choice of a mate and to value what she finds in marriage sufficiently so that she will work to make a success of it.

The happy marriages are those in which both husband and wife find fulfillment of a majority of these needs. In many marriages both partners either consciously or unconsciously seek to give to each other the love, understanding, and moral support that enables the spouse to feel that he counts for something. In many marriages enough of these needs are met so that both partner are fairly well satisfied with the bargain, and the marriage may be called successful. In other marriages one or the other may seem to take pleasure in puncturing the self-esteem of the spouse, or may be entirely unconscious of the personality needs of the mate and make no effort to contribute to their satisfaction the consciousness of these needs, nevertheless, impels people toward marriage.

The girl who is too anxious for marriage and who shows indications of aggressiveness in her behavior with men is likely to decrease her chances for marriage. Some men respond favorably to pursuit by the girl, but many fell that
they must do the pursuing and are wary of overly aggressive women. One college girl had the reputation of being overanxious for marriage. Through her college years and for some time afterwards she continued her search for a husband without success. At last she gave up hope and lost herself in her procession. Later and eligible widower found her and married her. She was attractive whole in college and probably would have been married at the time except for her aggressive courtship behavior. Many girls know how to pursue in a subtle way so that the man either believes he is taking the initiative or enjoys being pursued.

A third factor which must be taken into consideration in explaining the unmarried is that many people fail to achieve emotional independence in their relationship with their parents. This failure may be the fault of dominating parents, or it may be due to personality traits in the child himself. The child may form an abnormally strong attachment for one parent and fail to mature to where he can become interested in a member of the opposite sex outside the family. His affectional development has been arrested at an immature level. In some such cases the individuals may later marry. Sometimes they in effect marry the parent through their marriage to someone having many of the parental characteristics.

The most interesting case of parent-child attachment we have observed was one in which a couple had been married 40 years but had never lived together. They married with the understanding that the wife was to continue living with her mother as long as her mother need her. The husband had a business in another town and was to live there, since the mother-in-law would not leave the
farm to live in his home. When we met the couple they were still living apart. The mother-in-law was in her late nineties, the young folks, in their late sixties.

Some people do not marry because they fail to take advantage of the opportunities that they have. Certain young women may be quite sincere when they say that they wish to have a career other than marriage. They prepare for the career and either refuse to become seriously involved in courtship or do not accept the proposals of marriage that are made. They may engage in a profession for some time and then discover that when they are ready for marriage it is too late. They have passed the time when most girls marry and it is no longer easy to find eligible mates. If they have been successful in a career, they may have developed aggressive characteristics in working with men which do not attract men in an affectional way.

Other girls mature late in their attitudes toward marriage and even though they are not interested in a career, they pass up opportunities for marriage. They do not become interested in marrying at the time when opportunities are presented. Many modern spinsters quite freely express regret that they did not take advantage of earlier opportunities for marriage. They can see that some of those whom they disregarded earlier would have made fine husbands had they themselves been mature enough at the time to recognize a good marital prospect.

Marriage may contribute to longevity and mental balance slightly if it means that a man has someone to care for him and if he lives a more normal life, but the larger factor is that those who are the most normal physically and who
have the best mental balance are apt to marry. Those who are physically abnormal, insane, feeble-mined, or psychoneurotic are excluded from marriage or are less likely to marry. This selection explains the difference in personality disorganization and longevity between the married and unmarried male. Since even in present-day society with courtship customs changing men still have an advantage in choosing mates, these selective factors operate more effectively with men than with women. Women who do not marry are not necessarily the emotionally and physically inferior ones to the extent that may be true of men. In fact, women who would be excellent wives and mothers are frequently overlooked and remain unmarried because they have less opportunity than men to seek a mate openly.

A man may feel that he could never support a family and that therefore he should not marry. A woman who lacks confidence in herself may conclude at an early age that she can never attract a husband and she may therefore leave marriage out of her life plan. Some people are homosexual in their interest, that is, they desire companionship with the same sex and are a not interested in members of the opposite sex. Failure to develop heterosexual interests may have either a biological basis or may be due to social conditioning.

A surplus of marriageable women means that a radical shifting of social attitudes is need. The spinster ought not to feel that here is something wrong worth her because she did not marry. It must be openly and realistically
recognized that here are not enough eligible males in our present society and that many women, therefore, will remain unmarried.

If any stigma is to be attached to singleness, it should be attached to the single male. Although many males are unsuited for marriage because of physical defects, mental defects, alcoholism, economic inability, or criminality, some who remain unmarried are suited for marriage. There social pressure should be upon the marriageable but unmarried male rather than upon the unmarried female.

Girls have been conditioned to think of marriage as a desirable goal in life, whereas boys have not been so conditioned. With a surplus of women, however, it would be desirable if the conditioning could be reversed. The potential husband supply might be increased if boys were brought up to think of marriage as an inevitable and desirable part of adulthood. At the same time, more emphasis in the upbringing of girls might be placed upon the opportunity for worth-while living that does not necessarily include marriage. As long as nature continues to function, people will continue to marry; society’s problem at present is to attempt to remedy the conditions that permit qualified males to remain unmarried and that at the same time permit qualified females to be without husbands.