

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNCIL
PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE
STUDENTS' NEEDS

It would be of great value if a study were to be made among students in our Negro colleges to find out just what on a scientific basis these colleges need to do to prepare them adequately for courtship and marriage. This is a rich field for persons in the Social Sciences and in the field of Home Economics.

Students come to college with varying backgrounds. A few come from homes offering large opportunities for personal instruction in matters relating to courtship and marriage.

Most students have had varying experiences with courtship before entering college. Practically all have had some experience. The majority of students wish to marry. It is desirable that they should.

We come to an important question. Does the college provide proper guidance in the matters of courtship and marriage for young people? What role should it play in correcting, defining and redefining information and attitudes in this regard?

From studies made of graduates, both men and women, it has been disclosed that the parents and the educators ^{students} of ~~these persons~~ from the elementary school through college ^{have} ~~had~~ almost completely ignored their evident need to be prepared for certain inevitabilities of their lives including marriage [&] courtship.

^{There are} They ~~had~~ many difficult problems that ^{students are} ~~they were~~ not prepared to solve because their college training ^{has} ~~had~~ given them little on which to draw in helping with solutions.

^{are} There ~~were~~ religious problems. These ^{are} ~~were~~ mainly conflicts over the religious practices of their family and conflict within themselves over changing religious values.

me
There ~~were~~ health problems. Many had health problems before entering college. *students have*
These ~~were~~ not discovered by the college authorities. *getting* They were aggravated by
four years of neglect, *making* which made many suffer from illnesses that might have been
prevented if taken in time.

me
There ~~were~~ financial problems. Regardless of how much *large* their income was they *is studies*
did not know how to live within it. *show that students have not been taught to live with*

do
They did not know how to meet problems of crisis situations--deaths, illness,
premarital and marital relationships. There ~~were~~ problems of sexual adjustment.

P
There ~~were~~ problems arising out of conflict with relatives. There ~~were~~ husband-
wife relationship problems; parent-child relationship problems. *are realities*

for which the college gives little guidance
For most of these graduates their college training ~~had~~ contributed nothing
to their sex education of a scientific nature that ~~would~~ help them in making
proper adjustments. *5*

It would seem that the college has a real responsibility to the students
who come to them beyond what they are already offering ~~them~~ from the point of
view of the curricula and the extra-curricula.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS TO BE MET?

Courtship Needs

There are certain needs and problems all students face as they reach the
age of active dating, courting, becoming engaged and married.

During courtship, students' needs usually center around social etiquette
and form, personal standards, social and recreational needs; personality devel-
opment, the growth of the body, family and home relationships.

Certain social forms are supposed to be learned in the family, but we know
that many students do not know how to meet, associate with, and enjoy social
relationships with the opposite sex. Such inadequacy often makes them deny
themselves social contacts because they are afraid and insecure. The student can
be taught that mastery of social form and etiquette may be acquired from observing
what others do, by asking friends, by reading good books, and articles and above
all by active participation in social affairs.

Proper dress and the proper things to do are some problem. Whether to accept and when to accept gifts from young men, what kind of gifts, what to do when you disapprove of the conduct of the young man who is dating you are also important courtship problems and the college can give instruction in them.

Should a girl smoke and drink when she is out on a date, or at any time for that matter. How much intimacy is considered proper?

It would not be amiss for the college to teach that a decent courtship is more likely to result in a decent marriage than promiscuous intimacies. Students are vitally interested in questions of courting and marriage relationships and ask questions and are anxious for the right answers. Among questions that some students have recently asked are:

- (1) Why is petting not necessary before marriage.
- (2) Why is it that some persons have never had a boy or girl friend and what have they missed out of life.
- (3) What are the disadvantages of marrying a person who does not possess the same amount of college training you do.
- (4) Where is the proper place for a college girl living in a dormitory to kiss her boy-friend.
- (5) In these uncertain days with so many men folk away, what should be the single girl's outlook toward the future in the event she happens not to get a husband.
- (6) Why is it that many girls have more than one boy friend yet they do not like the idea of their boy friends having other girl friends.
- (7) Why is it that some girls are not popular among the opposite sex.
- (8) Does sex have anything to do with a person's temper. *disposition - Wood*
- (9) What are the disadvantages of revealing to the public birth control methods.

All of the questions are interesting and challenging. The one concerning the dormitory is particularly so from the point of view of dormitory construction. Every one wants privacy at some time, even college girls with their dates. The dormitories I have seen meet the minimum standards for privacy. Most of them provide none at all. Can the college give students self respect so that they will not misuse or abuse privacy? It is almost impossible in dormitory living to furnish the same privacy as the home does, but it would seem well that in future construction of dormitories college dormitory planners might well keep this factor in mind so that the more matured students, at least, could have a situation similar to those provided in some Y.W.C.A.'S with a number of small "beaux parlors."

The social purpose of dating and courting is to allow for a final choice of one person as a marriage partner after having sampled the field of available persons rather extensively. I do not know how it is on other campuses, but on our campus college is now a place to find marriage partners. Courtship is as much a part of the extra-curricula aspect of a student's life as his courses are a part of the curricula. Courtship should be encouraged. Normally and properly conducted it is a natural outlet for sex drives. Along with this point of view young people should be taught certain controls, inhibitions, and redirections of energies.

In the selection of a mate the student should know what to look for in their prospective marriage partners. They should know whether or not a person is biologically as well as socially of age to marry--does his educational background qualify him to make a good mate. What is his economic status or future. Will his nationality racial or religious status be conducive to a happy married life. Does he have good health and physical vigor. What is his occupation or prospective occupation?

There seems to be fear among some young women that the war is taking all of the men and they will not get husbands. There is the danger of their attitude resulting in their taking on a life partner that they would not even have considered in normal times. A very sensible student said the other day, "These girls ought to go to a Reception Center and see how most of the men look when they arrive there. They would not be so anxious to jump into marriage with the first soldier in uniform they see. There is so much difference between the appearance of the inductee and the man after he has been placed in uniform as to seem to make him two different persons, but inwardly he is the same person with the same background, the same thoughts, the same training or lack of it."

These are all needs that the college might meet from the point of view of the unmarried student. What is the obligation of the college to the married student? There are many problems facing the married student due to war conditions. As I think of these problems how they fall into two categories. First, those facing the young married student during the time her husband is away; and second, those facing her when he returns.

Many young married women are asking themselves the question-- what shall I do with my time while my husband is in the army? Shall I have dates with other men? If so, how often and what kind of dates. How shall I fill in the time that hangs so heavily on my hands?

There is the problem of meeting the housing needs of married students, both during the time of their husband's furloughs and during the time they are on foreign soil. There are the problems of the married student who lives with her own family or with the family of her husband. There is the problem of pregnant mothers. How shall the college counsel and guide them. There is the problem of making good housewives and future home makers out of these students.

There are financial problems of the war bride. Many are getting money from husbands abroad and often do not know what to do with it. Unless these students are very careful there will be disagreements with their husbands when and if they return as to, "What have you done with the money I sent you." Even if the husbands do not return they need advice about financial matters. It is believed that after the war conditions subside there will be many economic problems. The spend-thrift now will be the sufferer tomorrow.

I have in mind a specific student whose husband sent her \$100. She was elated over the matter. When asked what was she going to do with it, she said I am going to pay back some girls who loaned me money, I am going to buy a book, I am going to get some dresses from the cleaners and then I and my friends are going to splurge the rest. Upon further inquiry it was found that her real expenses were less than \$10.00.

Often-times men abroad do not themselves have much foresight. Another young husband sent his wife \$100 just to spend. He wrote that he did not want her to work and requested her parents not to let her work. He was not particularly interested in her remaining in college. In cases like these the role of the college is obvious.

The college has a definite role to play in helping these married students prepare for the changes they will find in their husbands, when they return and for the maturity of their returned husbands. Most of these men will be different persons when they return. Many will be better persons. The wife should be prepared to play whatever role is required of her.

The factors that I have been talking about are matters of a personal nature; that is, what can the college do for the individual student in personal development from the point of view of courting and marriage while in college.

From the vocational point of view, students need guidance also in matters of courtship and marriage. There are many problems that they will have to face as teachers in graded schools, high schools, as community and social workers.

Problems of family living have faced all groups of Americans in their adjustment to the American environment. They have been most acute in the Negro family. Unders slavery-since slavery-through the first World War and up to the present time, the impact of changing conditions have been acutely felt in the Negro family. One of the chief handicaps from which the Negro suffers is the persistence of an unorganized and disorganized family life among the masses. This family disorganization results in illegitimacy, in juvenile delinquency, in desertion, in non-support, divorce. If our students in our colleges can be given a sincere and deep appreciation for well ordered and stable homes, for the sanctity of marriage vows, obligation of parents to children and to each other, this would be a great contribution to their education both as individuals who will themselves set up homes; and will give them proper perspective for their vocations. Proper and adequate preparation by the college of students for courtship and marriage would be a real start to stability of home and family life. Never was that more true than now when families and members of families are in a state of flux.

From the community point of view there will be the problem of the married and the unmarried mother. They will have to be helped to find a satisfying place for themselves in the community, both from the point of view of making a living and of establishing homes for themselves and families. For young couples there will have to be adjustments in the old community or in a new one. There will be problems arising out of the breaking up of marriages after the war is over. It is believed that the divorce rate will be very high due to the rush with which many young people hurried into marriage.

The matter of employment for members of the family especially the father will be a factor in family stability. There will be many replacements of men by machines due to new developments. There will be new patterns of employment, with soldiers receiving first preference. These and many other factors will affect family life.

HOW SHALL THE COLLEGE GO ABOUT MEETING THESE PROBLEMS

In the beginning it was suggested that colleges could make studies to discover students' needs. In many respects the home and community have failed to give students many important essentials for satisfactory living. These studies would indicate where the weaknesses lie and the curricula could be built on them.

At the present stage, however, in a number of cases the colleges need only to correlate or integrate existing courses with changed or added emphasis. In other cases specific courses need to be instituted. For example, in most colleges the following subjects are taught: Economics, Sociology, including courses on the family, Psychology, Biology, Religion, either formally or informally, Mental Hygiene, Anatomy, Physical Education ; and in Home Economics, Child Development and Nursery School Education; Health and Home Making and Consumer Education. All of these are most important in education for courtship and marriage.

The form the course should take whether as a lecture series, in seminar groupings or in classroom would have to be left to the situation in individual colleges. In any case, such a course should be entirely practical.

In conclusion, may I say that society has placed great emphasis on the role of the woman in courtship and marriage. This is important. She does have a great responsibility, but I feel that we have been negligent in the matter of instructing young men as to what is their role in the important sphere of courtship and marriage. Young men have not been educated to know or to appreciate the niceties that women think of when planning for a home, equipping and maintaining a home. The young man is a neglected person in this respect. His needs are very great.

With returning soldiers coming not to our campuses, and with the prospect for still larger numbers when the war is over, some attention certainly needs to be given immediately to these young men.

The problems involved in courtship and marriage are real. The needs are at hand. The college should do its utmost to meet the needs.