MARITAL DISCORD
A STUDY OF
FIFTY
FAMILY SERVICE SOCIETY CASES

by

May Del Crawford
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MARITAL DISCORD
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INTRODUCTION

It is well established that marriage is the most important of all human relationships. In some form or other, marriage and the family have existed since primitive times and there is reason to believe that it will continue as long as human society.

Since investigation of human life is best conducted from the observation and consideration of human behavior, the following research is based on information included in the records of a social agency.

It is the purpose of this study to ascertain, with as great a degree of accuracy as possible, the facts about marital discord in the lives of fifty couples receiving assistance from the Family Service Society of Richmond, Virginia. The study will deal primarily with the conditions which seem to have caused this discord and with those circumstances which apparently ensued as results of it.

Causes of marital discord in this study will include those factors that tended to contribute to the termination of marital happiness.

The influence of these contributing factors brought about certain resultant changes in the marital status of the family, which changes will be understood as the effects of the marital discord.

Marital discord, in this study, therefore means a termination of marital happiness in the relationship between husband and wife,
caused by certain contributing factors and presenting certain effects.

The study is based on cases in the Central West End District of the Family Service Society that were active over various periods of time, but had been closed during the year 1931. Closed records were used for the purpose of securing a picture of the entire contact of the agency with the family, whereas active cases would show the development only up to a certain time. In the closed cases, it is possible to secure from the records a conception of the chronological development of the family from the time of referral or application to its close in 1931, the plans of treatment used by the workers, the services rendered by the organization, and their effects upon the general family situation. This is not possible from records of cases still receiving assistance from the agency at the time the research was made.

Since this study was based primarily on the information contained in the records, all available data were considered. This information fell naturally under certain headings previously classified by students of case records. This classification of data will be further discussed in the following chapters dealing with the results of the investigation and the explanation of terms used.

Careful study was made of the statistical cards of all of the four hundred and twenty cases closed in 1931 in the Central West End District. It was found that one hundred of these cards indicated a problem of marital discord. Since 50% of these cases would be sufficient as a sample, an established method of selection was followed; i.e., the one hundred cards were placed in alphabetical order, and every other one, beginning with the first, was selected
for study.

Secondary material was consulted coincident with the original study of primary sources. Authoritative writers from time to time have set forth theories and facts about the solidarity of family life in our modern social order. These writers deal with the history of the family, and with the causes and treatment of domestic conflicts. They will be referred to later in this study.

The investigation of these fifty records representing cases of marital discord proceeds along lines which aim to determine the causative factors of the discord involved, the effects resulting; and then an effort is made to draw certain conclusions regarding the cases studied.

"In speaking of the psychology of family life, I have in mind the development and play of those mental and moral qualities which members of the family are more especially to the fact that they are members of the family, and which again form a great part of their significance unless they are interpreted in their relation to family life. These qualities fall naturally into two groups. Perhaps the most striking are those characteristics which we speak of as family traits. Just as there are physical features, tendencies, habits, which reappear in generation after generation, or in one member after another of the same generation, and can only be explained by reference to the family, so also there are qualities of the mind, the character, the disposition, which belong particularly to the family, and can only be understood in reference to it.

Bocanquet, Helen, The Family, p. 242
CHAPTER I

THE FAMILY:
ITS ESSENTIALLY DYNAMIC MAKE-UP

The family has been slowly shaped into its present form by centuries of effort; it represents society's experiments and conclusions with reference to problems of profound importance.

A. Age-old significance.

When speaking of the age-old significance of the family, the writer has in mind all that this group as an institution has stood for since the beginning of human history. The family, as the nucleus of society, has always furnished a foundation upon which has been based the chance of personal development. It is also a social institution which normally provides for its members to freely express their dissatisfaction with other members, thus making it possible for them to unload the grievances, irritations, and burdens which daily life imposes. Helen Bosanquet made the following statements regarding the family:

"In speaking of the psychology of family life, I have in mind the development and play of those mental and moral qualities which members of the family owe more especially to the fact that they are members of the family, and which again lose a great part of their significance unless they are interpreted in their relation to family life. These qualities fall naturally into two groups. Perhaps the most striking are those characteristics which we speak of as family traits. Just as there are physical features, tendencies, habits, which reappear in generation after generation, or in one member after another of the same generation, and can only be explained by reference to the family, so also there are qualities of the mind, the character, the disposition, which belong peculiarly to the family, and can only be understood in reference to it.

*Bosanquet, Helen, The Family, P 241
"There is a second set of facts to be taken into consideration, which arise out of the family as such; out of the fact, that is, that it is a community made of units dissimilar in age and sex, complementary in their nature and mutually responsible. As with all organic wholes, its parts are admirably fitted by nature to subserve each other's needs, and to supplement each other's efforts."

From the viewpoint of the family as the basis of home life, it is well to consider what is generally implied by the term "home-life". It is that part of an individual's life, within the designated family group, of which he is an acknowledged member, where the associations are so closely related and intensified by everyday contact with the impressions formed from this contact usually affect the color in some way of all his reactions to other human associations. Yet this is not all, for the satisfying of human needs is normally an important function of the home. In regard to the significance of the family, Helen Bosanquet has further stated:

* "It may well be asked if all we get from the family is this peculiar intensification of feeling and these variety of qualities, and if the world would otherwise carry on as well without it, why cultivate and protect it so sedulously? Why not rather sweep it away as a narrow-minded and exclusive organization, and let every citizen know that his first and last allegiance is to the State?"

"The answer is, that if the world could carry on without the family, it could not afford to lose the qualities which go with it. It is a somber world as it is, and no shade or tone of feeling which makes for depth and

variety and richness can be spared from it. To reject the source of so much warmth and beauty because it sometimes fails, would be like banishing the sun from the sky because it is sometimes covered with clouds."

B. Social Necessity.

In order to understand fully the meaning of the family and to appreciate the value of its aspects other than those previously discussed, it is necessary to look into still another of the numerous phases of the family make-up. The theories of heredity concerning how much of an individual's make-up is due to his biological inheritance, that is, what part of a person's life is predetermined, have come gradually to be known and accepted as laws. Since so much importance is placed upon those inherited characteristics which are socially acceptable, it is natural that society and its members look to the family as a means of producing and preserving those qualities for which there have not been found satisfactory substitutes. In his discussion of the biological basis of the family, Herbert Jennings asks and answers the following question:

* "What are the peculiarities of the family, as a group of individuals?

"The family is a small group of individuals that share in a common stock of genes, furnished by the two parents; and that also share a common environment, of which the members of the family are themselves the most potent factors. As compared with a set of individuals taken at random, their inherited differences are less. But it is a serious error to assume uniformity in the family, in respect of either inheritance or environment. The method of shuffling, distributing, and recombining the genes of the parents insures that no child shall be like either parent in its generic

constitution; nor like any other child. In consequence of these generic differences, the members of the family differ considerably in the way they develop; in the way they respond to a given environment; in their behavior under given conditions; in what we call temperament, mentality, character. Even if it were possible to make the environment the same for all members of the family, it is by no means to be expected that all should develop the same type of personality; there are deep-lying and far-reaching differences in their original constitutions."

The family develops from the union of a man and woman coming from separate and distinct lines of ancestry. What the children of this union will be is dependent primarily upon the result of the fusion of these two lines of inheritance, both from the biological and social standpoint. Though each is not identical to either parent, he has similar characteristics of both parents. With this in mind, it seems that under normal conditions no other persons are prepared as well to care for that child as his parents because of the very fusion of these two inheritances. Therefore, unless the natural care is afforded, the child is cheated of a certain birth-right without which his own integration is neglected at certain points. The home is the strategic source of social control, the institution which is chiefly responsible for personality. Samuel George Smith indicates certain factors of a man’s life over which he has no control:

"A human being is born a man. He finds himself a member of a particular race, located in a certain social group, usually the inmate of some home whose ancestry he shares."

The natural protection of children makes the functioning of the family apparently a social necessity. The family environment

* Smith, S.G. Social Pathology, p 302.
exercises the earliest influence that the newborn child experiences. "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." It is thought that the family is significant in its effect upon children also because of its repetition of stimuli. In biological inheritance the contributions of each parent are equal by chance, but the role of the affections, so important for personality, is nurtured by association with the members of the family in the home. Yet the family is not only an instrument for shaping personality in the children, for determining whether he is to be timid, honest, conservative, or otherwise, but it is also the means for passing on the content of the social heritage, which includes transmitting the knowledge of the ways of doing things, that does not enter so intimately into the character, the knowledge of language or of how to work. Joanna Calcord states:

"It is what people are that gets across, not what they try to inculcate. If they are frugal and of fastidious taste, they will not necessarily be able to train their children to be the same, but they will inevitably create for those children an ideal—a concept—of prudence and good taste. They will do it whether they will or no."

Since marriage is essentially the union of a man and woman for the purpose of a life together and the rearing of children, the bond of equal responsibility for obligations undertaken in their lives must necessarily be taken into account as an important factor in the make-up of the family. They are obligated to build up the kind of social environment which will be of the greatest benefit to the child born into it; following his birth, they have further responsibilities growing out of the dependency of the child.

upon them for his every need until that period of time when he can assume responsibility of his own as an individual and in turn pass on this environment to his offspring. As the child grows older, he looks to his parents for the fulfillment of other needs than those they administered to when he was a baby. The joint cooperation of the mother and father still is needed to give to the child the balance essential to a normal background. That strength of character, of personality, which is furnished him by one parent alone is often not sufficient to fulfill the needs of a developing individual, who is moulded by contributions of the other parent, either of which contributions taken alone would be only partially sufficient.

These facts therefore furnish explanations why the family has endured for so many centuries. Ernest R. Groves has expressed reasons to believe that the family will continue, as follows:

* "In these days when there is an ever-growing pessimism regarding both marriage and parenthood, it is easy to forget that the family originated to fulfill a human need. The family is not something alien to human desire, forced upon people by outside pressure; it is an institution which has issued from the experiences of mankind as a means of satisfying some of the profoundest cravings of our nature."

(1) Changing Standards.

As was suggested in the opening phrases of Dr. Groves quotation, there is a doubt in the minds of many thoughtful and well-educated people as to the power of resistance of the family against the forces at work in modern society tending to discredit its fundamental functions as an influential body. This doubt

* Groves, Ernest Russell, The Drifting House, p 79
has its basis in the material evidences of the changing standards and functions whether denoting constructive progress or under-mining forces of the good is debatable. There has been a change in home life. Many former activities essential to the well being of its members have been transferred from the home to commercial fields and supplanted by present day activities that may or may not tend to produce solidarity. Serious-minded men and women welcome the fact that social order is dynamic in nature. The family as a phase of social order and sharing therefore in its dynamic characteristic has been undergoing changes in its make-up and continuity. Whether or not the changes so wrought are threatening the family's prestige as an institution concerns all thinking individuals who would not have the family assume a static aspect. They believe these are evidences that the family is strong enough to adjust to the demands of this dynamic social order and that this age-old institution is going not only to endure in the future but to continue to serve in its capacity as the most influential background for constructive progress of the whole of society. That change in all phases of life is inevitable is manifested throughout the history of mankind, and it is hopeful to believe that, though mistakes occur, the greater part of this constant change is necessary for achievement, since it is only through change that achievement can be wrought.

Tennyson seemed to appreciate this when he wrote:

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

* Tennyson, Alfred Lord, Morte d' Arthur
Certain interpretations of the developments in the family coincident with modern trends seem to indicate that instead of an application of scientific methods involving technical handling, there is a "taken-for-granted" attitude, toward this particular social institution. Science and its principles have been introduced into the operation of many other social institutions. Willystine Goodsell seemed to foresee the significance of failure to extend its methods into the family field when she wrote:

* "Although one social institution after another - notably the church, government, and law - has been compelled by profound social changes to revolutionize its theory and procedure, the family institution has remained relatively unchanged up to recent times. Within the last two generations, however, the social and economic forces silently at work for more than a century undermining the unity of the family have come to the surface and effected transformation in the home dramatic in their rapidity and extent."

The situation of the modern family is not due primarily to attacks by opposing forces, but rather to the neglect that necessarily follows in our time when any interest in life does not have the advantage of special organization. Family life is too much influenced by and too much a reflection of the current manner of living to justify attributing its signs of unrest to any single factor acting against it. The family is no longer protected by our social habits, but must look to its own organization for its vitality and achievement. In the case of the family, the motives and attitudes modifying and developing

*Goodsell, Willystine, Problems of the Family, P -101

*Goodsell, Willystine, History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, p 407
individual lead away from as well as to the home.

C. Social Concern.

Comparatively recently, i.e., within the last generation, the family has come into public consciousness as the matrix of a growing social problem. The rising tide of divorce, separation, desertion, and a general unrest among members of the family group are recognized as but the overt expressions of a new conception of the family, keenly felt but as yet largely undefined.

"While the modern family institution remains so unsatisfactorily adjusted to twentieth century conditions, voices are not lacking, either to point out the evils of our present marriage system or to preach, with greater or less confidence, their special gospel of reform. The variety and contradictory characters of the views upheld by one group or another are merely signs of the great complexity of the problem and the different temperaments and experiences of the champions engaged."

The economic aspect of civilization is significantly involved in the proceedings of the family group. To economic insecurity can be traced in large measure numerous ills from which the laboring and small-salaried classes suffer. Poverty, with its twin brother, ignorance, bear heavy responsibility for much unhappiness in our family groups today. Economic authorities recognize the appalling effects on the constitutions of both individuals and groups from the constantly present pressure of financial insecurity. The increasing economic liabilities involved in marriage and the establishment of a family has caused society to express anxiety regarding a hesitancy on the part of young people particularly, to assume the responsibility of home-making.

*Goodsell, Willystine, History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution, p 487
These subjects of social interest have been brought forcibly to public attention in an effort to show the importance of and the urgent need for certain social reforms.

"That the home is in trouble no one doubts. It has by no means passed its crisis. — Its condition challenges the science that is most concerned with problems of social welfare. More difficult to study than other institutions, because of its privacy and reticence, its problem is the one that thoughtful people wish better understood. The sociologist, in dealing with it, has the same obligation that the psychiatrist found in the prevalence of mental disease. There is the same imperative necessity of bringing science in a popular form to a great multitude who in their everyday life need the help it has to give. If home life is to be conserved, it must have the advantage of applied science."

Institutions, built up through ages of cooperative social effort, have been subjected to searching analysis and investigation. The institution of the family has not escaped the attention of the student of society.

"The family is the social institution closest to men's and women's hearts and associated with the tenderest and deepest experiences of their lives. Moreover, in its present monogamic form it represents to many minds in the Western world the only possible solution of the problem of wholesome sex relations, and of the proper care and maintenance of the offspring of such relationships. — In consequence, many thoughtful and well meaning individuals are frankly reluctant to meddle with its adjustments. — But reluctance to apply the scientific spirit and method to a study of the family has little by little been breaking down within the last decade. And here, again, the reason is not far to seek. The machinery of the family life seems out of joint. Far from running smoothly it has forced itself upon public attention by its creaking friction until mal-adjustments can no longer be ignored. The instability of the family is revealed by the marked increase in divorce among all classes and in desertion among the poor. Little by little

** Goodsell, W., History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution. p 1 - 3
serious men and women have been aroused to an appreciation of the fact that something is gravely wrong in the operation of the basic institution of society."

Inability to cope with existing economic conditions is but one of many present-day complexities not conducive to harmonious living among individuals of specialized groups. Authority has been gradually removed from the home, taking also that identification of interests which made the family a co-operating unit.

Yet, in spite of the forces at work in the everyday proceedings of the social order, there is reason to believe that certain worthwhile reforms can be introduced; i.e., reforms that will tend to redirect attention to the family's basic importance.

* Perhaps the only standard that can be accepted by all thinking persons is the ideal of the common good, the community welfare, with explicit recognition that this good cannot be attained by the arbitrary suppression of the individuals who compose the group. If society exists to secure the 'good life' for individuals, manifestly its conventions and its laws must be progressively reshaped to secure the best and fullest life, not for one class but so far as possible for every member of the community.

"When we recall what this institution has accomplished for the good of the social body in the past, we may well put forth our best efforts to preserve it. For what substitute for the monogamic family as the nursery of individuality has society yet involved? What other form of organization so completely secures the proper maintenance and training of the young? What other type of sex relationship has done so much to nourish the more spiritual phases of sex passion? In an age of domestic unrest every thoughtful man and woman should inform himself or herself on questions concerned with the family institution and exercise such

* Ibid, pp 498 and 550
influence as he or she may possess to deepen the respect in which it is held by the public in general, as well as to bring about needed reform in its operation."

brought about by the massing of contributing factors which seem to have been responsible for the divorce will be discussed as the forms of marital discord.

2. Desertion and Divorce as Forms.

Table No. 1

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<tr>
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<th>Males</th>
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</table>

Desertion was the form of marital discord found the greatest number of times in the fifty families.

Desertion is understood as an effort to escape from a difficult family situation. For the purposes of this study a deserter is defined as a man or woman who withdraws from the domestic circle, leaving his or her family to shift for itself.

In twenty-three, or 46% of the fifty cases, desertion was the part of the husband was found to be the form of marital discord.

There was two, or 4% of the total, wives shown to have contributed to the conflict because of "mental deficiency" among the four cases, or 8% of the total, which showed that the wives deserted. The remaining two, or 4% of the total number of wives, had deserted to escape physical abusive treatment from their husbands.
CHAPTER II
FORMS OF MARITAL DISCORD

Certain changes in the marital status of the family brought about by the massing of contributing factors which seem to have been responsible for the discord will be discussed as the forms of marital discord.

A. Desertion and Divorce as Forms.

Table No. I

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<td>Male 50</td>
<td>Female 50</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Desertion was the form of marital discord found the greatest number of times in the fifty families.

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There was two, or 4% of the total, wives shown to have contributed to the conflict because of "mental deficiency" among the four cases, or 8% of the total, which showed that the wives deserted. The remaining two, or 4% of the total number of wives, had deserted to escape physical abusive treatment from their husbands.
In the case of Howard and Anne Turner, Anne deserted Howard after several years of persistent conflict. When Howard was angry, his cruelty to Anne and the two children seemed to have no bounds until his temper had subsided. He was easily angered, having little patience with the natural, unpleasant incidents encountered in the everyday routine of living. Anne was of a temperament not given to retaliation, and she apparently endured her husband's cruel disposition as long as she could before leaving him and taking the children with her.

The husbands' desertions were for less definite reasons than the wives' desertions because the husbands were from homes showing varied factors and combinations of factors.

"Desertion is the poor man's divorce," a common epigram among people dealing with the problems, implies that there is no fundamental difference between the two forms of family disintegration, except the difference between the two population groups from which the individuals come. Desertion is typical of the dependent group, while divorce is confined largely to the middle and upper classes.

Divorce was the form of marital discord found the least number of times in the fifty families. By divorce is meant the legal dissolution of the marriage contract. In only two, or 4% of the fifty cases, divorce was a form of marital discord. The two husbands were the only individuals who had High School educations and the divorces were obtained through financial assistance of the husbands' relatives, who, however, had refused to lend aid
to the "family", thus causing the dependency upon the agency.

Vincent and Kate Findell had been married thirteen years, had two children, Vin, age 11 and Elizabeth, age 9; Vincent's parents had strongly opposed the marriage, but he had been willing to "break" with them and go his own way. Kate had practically no education and had always resented to a certain extent the fact that her husband was "superior" to her in the eyes of his family and their acquaintances. For about five years after their marriage, they managed to live according to a rather high standard, but financial difficulties slowly set in, causing them to lower their standards accordingly. Vincent was ambitious, wanting to spend as much time and money as possible in acquiring more education; which was a point of much conflict in the home for many years as Kate preferred to use all available money for an artificial standard of living.

When Elizabeth was about eight years of age, Vincent was forced to swallow his pride and appeal to his father for assistance; this was definitely refused unless he left Kate. A tense atmosphere prevailed in the home for almost a year; Kate became more and more persistent in her economic demands and had no hesitation about nagging him concerning his attempts at educating himself, saying that he was "high-hat".

Finally Vincent was persuaded by his family to divorce Kate, which resulted in his keeping Vin with him and Kate keeping Elizabeth with her.
B. Separation and Non-Support as Forms.

Table No. II

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<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</table>

Separation refers to parting to which the individuals have mutually agreed. The records show "separation by mutual agreement" in three or 6% of the fifty cases. Reference was made only in these cases to the clear understanding which existed between husband and wife regarding the facts of their marital unhappiness. These individuals faced reality and were able to better plan for their future because of this understanding of and insight into the situations.

No mention was made in the record of the education of either Fred or Louise Hendon, but their comprehension of the situation that prevailed in their home-life indicated a farsightedness not displayed in many of the other cases. Fred had been irresponsible all of his life, had never become efficient in any line of work, and had proved to be "too unsteady" to hold his position as a taxi-driver. Fred's laziness and tendency toward complete shiftlessness caused Louise to nag him so consistently that he went home as infrequently as possible. Louise, who had hoped for Fred's success in some business, was of the aggressive type who had no tolerance for one who showed so little initiative.

In attempting to solve the marital discord that had ensued from these conflicting personalities, they saw little
promises of happiness in the future since each apparently had ceased to care for the other. Louise was twenty-five, and Fred about two years older. Considering the chances of each for more pleasant adjustments, they decided that separation was the least difficult way out of their tangled home situation.

Non-Support is understood to mean no effort to maintain the home, allowing others to provide for it.

In eighteen, or 36% of the total cases, non-support of his family was the husband's apparent reaction to his maladjusted domestic life. The records showed that in each of these cases the husband made no effort whatever to maintain his home. Eleven of these instances seemed to be largely influenced by the poor home-making of the wives, which was referred to definitely in the records. The remaining seven seemed to come from the wives' apparent laziness and lack of interest or pride in the well-being of the family. When situations arose with which the men obviously would not or could not cope, their reaction was to cease all effort and thus let the problem drift unsolved, rather than to make an attempt to better the home conditions. This was noticeable in the case of Charlie and Marie Nebbs. Charlie was an unskilled laborer who rarely earned sufficient wages for anything more than a "simple life;" however, he was well-known for his ability on certain "jobs" and generally could find work whenever he wanted it. Marie had never been an efficient housekeeper, but for several years after their marriage had managed to eke out enough for necessities for the family from Charlie's wages.
Her neglect of the appearance of the home had always irritated Charlie, who complained regularly, saying he saw no reason for trying to earn more since Marie took so little care of the things they did have. When their little girl began attending school, Marie could spend even less on the home in order to supply the child with books and other school material. Conflict arose over the apportionment of Charlie's wages, and he could not be made to see that Marie's inefficiency was not totally responsible for their economic condition. Various persons nagged and accused him of being "worthless and lazy" to which he responded by refusing to work at all. "non-support is a predesertion symptom and the non-supporter a potential deserter." Miss Breed, says, 'The deserting husband is at home the non-supporting husband.' There is no doubt that the two groups grade imperceptibly into each other."

As stated later, the records showed a tendency on the part of the wives of deserted and non-supporting husbands to attempt court proceedings in an effort to secure support for themselves and children. However, in the instances where court action was secured, the wives withdrew their charges if any punishment was likely to be inflicted upon the men. Nine records referred to instances where the wife had accepted the "periodic deserter's" return as often as he left her and reappeared a few months or several years later. Joanna Calcoed attempted to explain "why women take deserters back" when she wrote:

"A desire for support, or for a resumption of sex relations, may play a part in a wife's decision to forgive the wanderer. There are many factors — use and want, pride in
being able to show a good front to the neighbors; a feeling that it is unnatural to be receiving support from other sources. — the hundreds of small details that go to make up the habit of living together, have each their separate pull on the woman whose instinct to be wife and mother to her erring man is urging her to give in."

"Usually the non-supporter displays less courage and initiative than the deserter. He is likely to have less physical and mental stamina. Often he has a sentimental attachment to his family but shirks his responsibility. Frequently he is alcoholic and almost always he is industrially inefficient. The deserter is likewise a shirker, but with a roving disposition. He is apt to be more vigorous and aggressive, a man of higher intelligence and greater industrial skill."

"Non-support --- is not so much a case of running away from trouble as it is of giving up the struggle. The attitude of the non-supporter appears to be very much like that of the child who, in the face of difficulty, simply stops trying. It is less frequently and less obviously a causious attempt at accommodation than in either desertion or divorce."

C. Domestic Difficulty as a Form.

**Table No. III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Open Conflict</th>
<th>Mental Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Domestic difficulty refers to unhappiness, as a form of marital discord which did not culminate in the actual breaking up of the home in so far as the period of the contact of the agency was concerned. In this study, domestic difficulty includes open demonstration of conflict or unhappy, distorted mental attitudes not accompanied by an exhibition of the feelings, which were experienced by the individuals.

* Queen, Stuart Alfred and Mann, Delbert Martin, Social Pathology, pp 75 - 76 and p 71
In twenty, or 40% of the total cases, there figured open and frequent demonstrations of the feelings of unrest and unhappiness, which it seemed had ensued from family discord, without a definite step being taken by either the husband or wife toward a disruption of the marital relationship. In eighteen, or 33% of these cases, it was the wife who apparently had been unable or unwilling to control her feelings, and had surrendered herself to the emotional strain of a disorganized home life. The two men comprising the remaining 4% of these cases, appeared to have been naturally of an unstable emotional make-up. These individuals showed little initiative in undertaking to solve the difficulties affecting their well-being, allowing themselves instead to become temporarily agitated over the permanent aspects of their existence.

In twenty-five or 50% of the cases presenting distorted mental attitudes as reactions to unhappy home conditions, twenty-three, or 46% of the total, included only the wives which again shows that the less decisive effects were found among the women. These attitudes were reflected particularly in the pessimism of the individuals, which the social worker observed as becoming more intense and impenetrable during her contact with the family. Since practically no demonstration was made of feelings, the emotional reactions were inhibited and strained, and the records indicated that a continual accumulative state of marked unhappiness was the most obvious form of discord affected by the conflicting marital relationship.
As in the cases showing overt responses, likewise in these there were no indications that either the husband or wife contemplated discontinuing the home-life, in spite of its dissatisfying aspects.

The effects of these forms of marital discord are not confined to the specific changes in the marital status of the family, but extend also into the whole make-up of society. Dependency is often a direct development from homes broken because of serious domestic difficulty. Dependency and the lack of new interests to turn to in life frequently contribute to an apparent personal degeneracy when the marital ties are broken.

It is possible that society is paying dearly for its forms of marital discord through the acknowledged distrust of marriage by a part of its youths, who, in all probability, would be physically and mentally capable of sitting a more lasting pattern of marital endurance.

Dependency emerges in one of the most significant phases of modern social organization affecting family life. More serious deleterious reactions within the individual, each playing a part that is detrimental to him and to the solidarity of the family of which he is a member.

Even in instances where the fundamental needs of the personality apparently are satisfied in the home, the entire national make-up of the family is in a state of continual conflict, which leads, according to experts to agree, is a product of recent times. Members of the family are conscious of a sense of frustration.
CHAPTER III
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MARITAL DISCORD

In this chapter those factors found in this study that tended to contribute to the different forms of marital discord will be discussed as they figured in the case records studied.

The phases involved in analyzing marital discord include its study as a form of cultural maladjustment due to the make-up of society, and in terms of the individual as personal maladjustment.

A. Economic.

This research indicates that certain conditions growing out of the modern social organization play a large part in family disorganization, or at least, in the disorganization, of the accepted relationship between husband and wife.

(1) Pressure.

Economic pressure is one of the most significant phases of modern social organization affecting family life. There results interwoven reactions within the individual, each playing a part that is detrimental to him and to the solidarity of the family of which he is a member.

Even in instances where the fundamental needs of the personality apparently are satisfied in the home, the entire emotional make-up of the family is in a state of continual conflict, which state, authorities seem to agree is a product of recent times. Members of the family are conscious of a sense of frustration.

*Brisby, Mary Swan, "Family Achievement"; The Family, Vol IX, July 23, P173
and restlessness from which they would not have suffered a generation or two ago."

(2) Inadequate Income.

The cases studied showed that a situation not only of inadequate income but of actual dependency existed during the period of agency contact in 100% of the cases. Dependency refers to economic conditions which render the family unit incapable of sustaining itself upon its own resources, and made necessary appeal for assistance outside the family unit, which culminated in application to the social agency.

Reactions coming from this state of dependency included a definite sense of insecurity coincident with emotional conflicts caused by the lack of control over economic conditions affecting their well-being, which reactions the worker found frequently dominating the discord. Though material relief lessened the tension of the moment, it did not apparently supply the need of security on which the family could build their hopes for the future, therefore the accompanying anxiety persisted.

The case of Tom and Anna Hobson showed added difficulty because of Anna's extravagance. She had been brought up in a home where her every wish was granted, had never had to learn to be economical, and, at the time of her marriage, Tom was earning enough to permit her extravagances to continue. They had been married about four years when Tom's prolonged unemployment due to economic conditions in the factory where he had worked for over ten years resulted in application to the Family Service Society.
Tom worked at "odd jobs" but his income, which would hardly have been adequate for the most economical living, was entirely insufficient, due to Anna’s extravagance.

Anna was apparently unable to make the necessary adjustment. Tom was impatient because she did not or could not, and many disagreeable arguments grew out of discussion between them concerning finances.

"The manifestly inadequate income, due not to individual lacks in the wage-earners themselves but to causes affecting the whole class of the population to which they belong, is a serious disease striking at the roots of family life."

It was found that 30% or forty, of the fifty families were independent while 20%, or ten, were dependent, prior to contact with the agency. "Independent" refers to economic conditions wherein the family unit is capable of sustaining itself upon its own resources at all times.

(3) Lowered Standards.

In the instances where the families were experiencing dependency for the first time, marked changes were noted which indicated a lowering of standards coincident with financial difficulties. The worker learned from the members themselves of seventeen, or 34% of the families and from persons who had known them for years that dependency had wrought grave changes in the families standards of living and in the individual’s outlook on life. In one case this lowering of standards was described by the worker as being so obvious that definite changes in the physical surroundings...

as well as in the individuals could be rated on each successive visit she made to the family. The home which had been in perfect order at the time of the first visit, and for a few times thereafter, began to show less care; and an untidy appearance was noted about the woman's dress. It took careful handling and concentrated effort on the worker's part to restore the family's standards of living, showing them at the same time that certain characteristics of theirs need not be affected by a lowered economic status.

(4) Occupational Chart.
The homes of these fifty families were described in the records as being adequate for shelter but possessing few of the comforts normally associated with pleasant or satisfying home environments. Because of limited finances, the family budget included only the bare necessities of life. There was little chance for personal expression in the selection of household articles that normally would have tended to centralize the interests of the members of the family in the home.

The case records showed a variety of twenty-eight different occupational groups with which the fifty men of the selected families had been associated. The table shows that 30%, or fifteen, was the largest number in any one occupational group, the "laborer," which term designates one who does for hire physical work requiring little skill. The remaining 70%, or thirty-five include those men employed at more skilled work but receiving low wages or salaries, which fact appears correlated with the poor educational background of the families. The occupational and educational classification apparently was a consequence of that biological and social heritage brought out in the records, which shows that the study deals with but one level of society.

B. Personal.

Human nature is never completely dominated by a single causal influence. No family discord can be changed up entirely to the effects of economic pressure or any other one factor.
The interaction of personalities is significant in all human associations. When social forces react unfavorably, it will naturally be evidenced, whether recognized or not, in one's behavior toward other individuals. There cannot be too much consideration given to this interplay of personalities; effects of it figure daily in the lives of men and women in both their social and economic contacts.

It is not possible to chart or put in tabular form the effects of personality interaction upon the individuals of the families studied because of the lack of uniformity in the case recording, which is natural since the personality of the individual worker affects, to some degree at least, her impressions, her conceptions, and her methods of dealing with different situations presented.

However, thirty-one, or 62% of the records noted that this characteristic of human nature had not always been analyzed as carefully as its influence and power seem to warrant. In these cases, individualization had played an important part in determining the degree to which one person's reaction or response was different from that of another person's to circumstances affecting them both.

In explaining the complex situations involved in those thirty-one families, the workers also found that though each person is different, the fundamental desires of human nature are strikingly alike. Conflict arose in the families where one,
though quick to recognize differences between himself and another, did not attempt to sufficiently understand the other's attitudes, ideals and thoughts determining his nature to appreciate the similarity between the two personalities. The workers showed skill in handling these situations, in interpreting the fundamental needs of their personalities to the individuals, awakening in them a sense of appreciation and tolerance which seemed to lessen discord in the home.

C. Social.

Whereas in the family of a century or two ago the woman was not considered an individual with the same rights and privileges as the man, the movement toward individualism that had its beginning in the 18th century, has slowly placed the woman on the same basis with the man. The fact that this is still not recognized today in some levels of society was commented upon in several of the records as causing trouble between a husband believing in the subordination of woman and a wife striving to exert the right she felt was hers. Men and women represented in the fifty families had failed to comprehend the intimate human needs of each other by neglecting to look behind the mask of a bold exterior for a better understanding of each other.

"If we are to understand the rather bewildering situation in the family life today, we shall have to go behind the social and economic situation and attempt to learn what is happening to men and women. It is not enough to repeat the catalogue of economic and industrial changes if we do not go further and ask what they imply for the conduct of men and women generally, and more especially in the association we call marriage."

(1) Ignorance of Marriage

In the material studied, ignorance of the nature and meaning of marriage was a fertile source of conflict between husband and wife. The records stated that no instruction on the facts of sex or parenthood had been given these individuals as prospective parents at any time prior to their marriage.

Ignorance concerning the meaning of marriage was not confined to its physical aspects. In thirty-nine, or 78% of the cases, the individuals involved had not understood that any marriage relationship should be one of comradship and mutual respect as well as one of romantic passion; they had not been fully aware of the numerous delicate adjustments of one personality to another that was important if their wedded life was to have been a satisfactory experience. Nineteen, or 38% of the records brought out that the individuals had sought, through the home, satisfactions that had led them to estimate the value of the home by its power to increase pleasures that were only secondary to its main purpose and therefore indirect products. These people who established a home with no thought of enjoying the essential elements, demanding certain pleasures and nothing else considerably lessened the family's chance to succeed.

In the case of Bob and Rita Sands, the worker had gone far enough into the back-ground of the individuals to have a definite idea of the homes from which each had come.

Bob's father had died when he was still a small child, and he had never known the close companionship of an older man.
His mother had been so absorbed in the rearing of his three older sisters that he had little intimate contact with her. As a young boy, his associates were others about his age and from whom there was little chance to gain information regarding sex and marriage.

Rita's mother and father were quiet, conservative people who had not known the "proper" way to raise children, but had given to her certain valuable information on which to build her ideals of marriage and a home.

Bob and Rita were married after a courtship of three weeks; they were infatuated with each other and Bob's boyish enthusiasm had caused Rita to forget her ideals for the moment, running away to be married in a nearby city.

After a few months their enthusiasm passed, leaving a boy and girl of nineteen and seventeen years whose ideas of what a home should offer were totally incomprehensible to each other.

The worker knew them after four years of marriage through which both had struggled to find some grounds of common understanding regarding their marriage relationship and sex life.

It took intensive work to gather enough information concerning them both for the worker to analyze the situation at hand and thus attempt to help Bob and Rita to solve their own problem by explaining as simply as possible what she believed to be the underlying factor of their marital discord. She gave them an understanding of the mutual sacrifices that had to be made in adjusting to each other and to the responsibilities undertaken at marriage. She pointed out to them how they had been blinded to the necessity of a parallel change in their own methods of dealing
with life, seeing only the differences between them, and faced by a feeling of hopeless inadequacy to combat with the forces they believed to be at work against them.

To enable themselves better to adjust in their personal lives, men and women must gain understanding of these less apparent aspects of their situation. They should discover how far the traditional patterns of conduct for men and women, for parents and children, have been frustrated and distorted by those changes in the material culture that have taken place. It is necessary that they attempt to learn the impact of the changing social life upon personality and mating.

"Young men and women face either frustration in their efforts to conform to the older patterns, or confusion and anxiety as they explore for new patterns of conduct. These frustrations and anxieties are the dominant aspects of home and family-life today."

Society should show more interest and exert more effort than it now does to increase the stability of marriage relationships. The education of youth for marriage is apparently a necessary social responsibility that has not received the consideration needed from members of society capable of coping with the problem. The individuals studied through the case records obviously would have been assisted in working out their difficulties had they received guidance and sex instruction either before or after marriage.

"When marriage is threatened by failure, then the purpose lost sight of must be recrystallized, the ideal revived, and intelligent plans of mutual contribution put into action, or else the relation will slip from the plane of

* Frank, Lawrence K., Op. Cit. P 100
** Riggs, Augtin Fox, Intelligent Living, P 67
ethical progress to that of mere social tolerance and thence to intolerance and wreck."

(2) Incompatibility.

Incompatibility was outstanding as a contributing factor to marital discord. Generally speaking, incompatibility is a difference between husband and wife due to inherent characteristics. The general connotation of cruelty implies physical abuse, but in addition, the legal interpretation includes mental cruelty. The records described that men and women who were apparently temperamentaly unsuited, and who had a wide variation of tastes, and of desires, were thus confronted with differing opinions which seemed never to coordinate. Twenty-seven records, or 54% of the total, showed that the variation in tastes between the husbands and wives had been noted by the workers' observation of the homes or by observation of decorative articles purchased by the couples. The workers seemed to believe that this quality could have been a source of happiness to each individual had there been an understanding into and appreciation of the different qualities in each other. These records showed efforts on the part of the workers to arouse first a tolerance, with which came understanding, then an appreciation in each for the tastes of the other; some by praising the articles bought by each, commenting on what made them particularly attractive, others by speaking of the qualities in the individuals which had prompted them in making their selection.

In each of the twenty-seven cases showing incompatibility of temperaments contributing to marital discord, the differences in little things noted above carried over to the fundamental
aspects of their married life. Recognizing that these were under-
lying difficulties which were only reflected in the less important
little things, the worker hoped to reach the roots of trouble
dealing with the more obvious effects first and gradually showing
the individuals how they might work out the problems for themselves.

Incompatibility and the treatment given it was shown in
the case of Bill and Ida Rambeau, who had married after a brief
courtship of seven months. The disagreements which had arisen
between them during that time and explained as "only natural
lovers' quarrels" became more intensified shortly after marriage.
For the first four years of their married life, Bill's income
afforded them a comfortable home and means of enjoying certain re-
creational activities. Bill took an interest in the home, wanted
to furnish it as attractively as possible, and would have delighted
in having friends visit them, but Ida showed no interest whatever
in keeping the house neat, preferring to spend her time with the
neighbors during the day and desiring usually to go out in the
evening to dinner and picture show.

This variation of tastes was typical of all of their in-
terests in life, and since both of them could not be satisfied,
severe quarrels constantly ensued.

The worker encouraged Bill and Ida to do the things each
one liked to do but doing them together with a conscious effort on
the part of both to make each other feel a common sharing. An
underlying conflict continued which the worker soon interpreted
as differences in basic characteristics for which each had to build
up a conscious tolerance of before their problem was solved. However, their intelligence was average or better, they both definitely wanted to be congenial if possible, and thus were of great help to themselves in working out the entanglement of difficulty.

(a) Sex.

The basis of this incompatibility may be economic, physical or social. Those families showing the physical aspect were in the cases where it was obviously the woman's sterile condition, rendered so through venereal infection at some time during marriage, which caused the incompatibility in the marital relationship. Of the seven cases, or 14%, in which this physical basis was obvious, two families had three children each, and the other five families had only one child each. The two families in which there were three children each definitely showed a better adjustment to the situation than the other families. One of the five families showing this lack of adjustment was that of James and Joyce Staton whose only child was born about a year after their marriage at which time Joyce was rendered sterile through venereal infection.

James was intolerant of his wife's condition, taking the attitude that she was to blame for depriving him of his natural privilege - his attitude aroused resentment in Joyce toward him. Each turned to the child as a compensation and the worker believed that the jealousy and maladjustment in their relationship arose from this situation. They were at a loss to discuss frankly and
intelligently the sex matters precipitating their major discord, which the worker felt was due to inadequate information regarding sex.

Such discussions are not generally accepted and certainly not practiced among the people whom the study included. In the case records where any information was given as to the discussion of sex, as between the husband and wife, it was clearly shown that the terms used by the clients among themselves were vulgar and deprecating. The husband or wife showed, in each instance recorded, a definite hesitancy in discussing the sexual discord with the worker and manifested a realization of the crudity of their expressions and terms. Whenever the barrier, which the husband or wife seems to establish between himself or herself and the worker when the question of sex arises, is broken through there is evidence of the feeling of artificially established social inequality between the worker and clients making a comprehensible conversation most difficult.

Sexual incompatibility as brought out in the immorality noted among the individuals was possibly responsible for much of the marital discord prevalent in their lives.

<table>
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<th>Immorality Table No. V</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tot. Indvs.</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>After Marriage</td>
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Immorality in this study refers to illicit sex relationships entered into by the man or woman, or both, either before or after marriage. The above table shows to what extent immorality prevailed among the one hundred individuals in the case records. The records showed that illicit sex relationships frequently evolved from the differing attitudes of the husband and wife toward sex and morals, i.e., the standards by which one directed his activities were for the most part determined by individual conceptions and were significant in the marriage relationship when the behavior of either husband or wife was antagonistic to the standards of the other.

Among the thirty-six individuals, or 33% of the total number spoken of as immoral in the records, twenty-four, or 24% of the total, were immoral after marriage, while twelve, or 13% of the total, had been immoral before marriage.

Among the twelve individuals, i.e., 13% of the total, recorded as having been immoral before marriage, in only one instance was there reference made to the fact that the immorality continued after marriage, while in 24%, or twenty-four cases of immorality after marriage, the marital relationships apparently were not sufficient.

The one instance referred to above was that of Sally Baker, who, it was thought, had been a prostitute since the age of fifteen, and continued her immoral practice after her marriage. She was married at the age of twenty-one, and it was emphasized in the record that her husband's attitude accompanied by his "cutting" remarks to her concerning her past life probably had
been responsible for the misconduct after marriage.

Eleven, or 22%, of the cases presented the problem of sex incompatibility as contributing to marital discord because of excessive sex demands of the husband. The worker, in most instances, had been confided in by the wife who was unable to adequately meet his demands. Four of these cases showed that the husband's demands had been met by complete sex refusal on the part of the wife. In all of the cases mentioned above, sex maladjustment was believed by the workers to be the underlying factor contributing to discord in the individuals' marital relationships.

The case of Joe and Alma Reeds presented a couple about the same age who had been married seven years when economic difficulties resulted in contact with the agency. Their first child was born about ten months after their marriage when both were about twenty-six years old. Four other children were born about a year apart.

Alma felt that they had no right to have more children when they could not adequately support the four they already had. Joe seemed to agree with her, but continued his sex demands. For awhile Alma allowed herself to submit, but finding that he became more and more persistent in his demands of her, she resorted to sex refusal.

Their married life which formerly had been normally happy became one of continual conflict. Joe was irritable and cross with Alma—his attitude carried over to the children, which in turn infuriated Alma to the point that they engaged in severe
quarrels.

* "The classification of sex attitudes includes sex maladjustments, excessive sex demands by either party, sex refusal, interest in an outsider due to dissatisfaction at home, or maladjustment due to ignorance of sex psychology."

(b) Age.

The prevalence of incompatible marital relationships was further shown in the records as caused by a marked difference between the ages of the married couples. In these instances, the years had tempered the desires, the enthusiasm, and the ambitions of one while fewer years and fewer experiences accounted for the impelling desires, enthusiasm, and ambitions of the other; thus a difference of several years in the ages of husband and wife was felt by the worker to be responsible for the disintegration of ideals and aspirations, which normally would have tended to concentrate the mental and physical efforts of both toward common, mutual goods.

Among the five, or 10% of the total families in which age difference figured in the records as a causative factor of marital discord, was the case of Willie and Lucy Adams, aged fifty-eight and twenty-four respectively, who obviously were unable to understand and appreciate the differing personality needs of each other. They and the persons of their acquaintance recalled to mind so frequently the difference in their ages that it was never sufficiently forgotten for them to establish a feeling of mutual equality.

The reactions of Willie and Lucy, as recorded, were very much like those displayed between an antagonistic, rebellious child.

*Hixenbaugh, Elinor Ryan, "Reconciliation of Marital Maladjustments" Social Forces. April '39, p 217
and his father who cannot recall his own childhood sufficiently
clearly to understand the juvenile point of view.

* "I'll soon be gone from
here," she said
"Gone from this safe and
tedious place
"Where I've shelter for my
head
But nothing for my spirit's
grace."

(3) Interference of Relatives.

The interference of relatives was recognized and
recorded as contributing to discord between husband and wife. The
term "in-laws," used in relation to any unhappy home situation,
generally implies that the conflict had a basal stimulation from
the interference of some member or members of either the husband's
or wife's family or both. The unwillingness shown by mothers and
fathers to forgo the inflicting of protective and defensive sugges-
tions upon their children who had married and normally should have
accepted the responsibility for their own activity was resented by
the husband or wife. Interference of relatives was not restricted
only to mothers and fathers, although it was generally conceded
that the greatest number of inter-family conflicts arise from these
sources. Close ties between a man and woman and some member of his
or her family created difficulties in the married life of the
individual.

In the records investigated, reference was made merely to
"relatives" of either husband or wife, not stating the actual
relationship to the husband or wife thus precluding the possibility

* Mullins, Hélène, "The Understanding Husband," Scribner's
Vol. xci, #4, April '32, p 317
of differentiating accurately the position of the relatives, with respect to the family situations.

The interference of relatives had reacted unfavorably in thirty-two, or 64%, of the fifty families. It was found that in nineteen, or 38%, of the instances, the husband’s relatives of undetermined kinship had been instrumental in producing the discord and in thirteen, or 26%, of the instances, the same had been true of the wife’s relatives, also of undetermined kinship.

In the case of John and Sarah Carter, it seemed that John’s relatives had always felt themselves to be "above" any other people among their particular social acquaintances. John and Sarah had grown up together in the same neighborhood, and, as a boy, John had obtained a certain satisfaction from being the only one in his family who considered Sarah as "good" as he was. They were married against the wishes of John’s relatives, who constantly accused him of disgracing his family by marrying "beneath himself". Sarah was sensitive to the abusive treatment of her "in-laws" and from these conflicting attitudes serious discord arose between John and Sarah which disrupted their chances for marital happiness.

(4) Former Marriages.

Former marriages by either husband or wife were effective in producing conflict, because, as cited in the records, one or the other persistently referred to the former relationship, causing much personal discomfort. In several cases the husband’s evidence of extreme jealousy resulted in the wife’s taking advantage of his attitude, infuriating him with accounts of the splendid
qualities of her former husband.

In seventeen, or 34%, of the families, former marriages seemed to have contributed a basal influence out of which developed factors that in turn were influential in producing marital discord. Of these, thirteen, or 26%, were cases in which the husband had been married before while in four, or 8%, of the cases, it was the wife who had been formerly married.

In the case of Sam and Norma Minden, Sam's former marriage was a source of much discord. His former wife had been an excellent housekeeper, though she apparently had been most unreasonable in her financial demands of him. However, after they were divorced and Sam had married Norma, he seemed to remember only her best characteristics, which he obviously compared to the less favorable qualities in Norma. Although Norma was most considerate in her financial demands of Sam and was probably much more temperamentally suited to him, she was not an efficient housekeeper. Sam was impatient with her about the home, comparing her efforts with those of his first wife, and seemed to judge Norma solely by that one quality.

5. Miscellaneous Factors Contributing to Marital Discord.

Table No. VI

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The above table shows a miscellaneous grouping of factors which entered into and contributed to the marital discord figuring
in the records, although they probably were not the most outstanding or most influential in the conflict. The table is better understood when the meaning of its terms are made clear. "Abuse" means physical cruelty, ill-treatment, insulting speech. "Drink" refers to a man's frequent alcoholic states that were shown to result unfavorably upon his home conditions. "Nagging" is interpreted as a woman's continual scolding and finding fault with her husband. "Poor home-making" includes a woman's neglect of her home duties both with respect to her husband's well-being and that of the children. The term "laziness" means an indolent nature, dislike for work, and an inclination to be irresponsible. "Mental deficiency" means those instances of individuals clinically diagnosed as being of "below average intelligence."

The fact that the table evidences twenty-three more factors than the number of families shows the existence of more than a single factor contributing to the discord in several families. In some instances, there seemed to have been a combination of two or more factors which tended to interact and thus stimulate reactions of outstanding significance.

In seven of the nine instances where nagging on the part of the wife was found to exist, abuse was practiced by the husband as a reaction to this nagging. It was evidenced in the record that Paul and Emma Shafer's married life was one of perpetual discord including open demonstrations of their feelings at frequent intervals. Emma was a typical nagging woman who found fault with
everything Paul did or attempted to do, and who seemed to delight in reminding him of the repeated failure of his attempts to establish himself in a more profitable occupation than that of painting. Paul had a violent temper which he had never learned to control and when aggravated he responded with cruel physical abuse. This state of conflict resulted in Paul's desertion shortly after the birth of their first child, when Emma was even more irritable than she had been during the two years they had been married.

The undermining effects of an excessive use of alcohol were not confined to the drinker himself. His wife and children were the most immediate sufferers. In all twelve instances noted where the man's drinking was considered as a causal influence of the marital discord in the home, this unfortunate situation had been accompanied by a decided decrease in the earning powers of the individuals. Out of these twelve instances, there were eight which showed that the woman's poor home management was likewise a factor which tended to terminate marital happiness. In the case of Jim and Evelyn Woods, Evelyn had little incentive to keep the house attractive as Jim usually went home too intoxicated to notice any of her efforts. Besides this, Jim's drinking had caused him to lose several positions and their resulting unstable economic status was such that Evelyn could not get the things she would have liked for the home. Thus it is shown that in this case the contributing factors acted in a "vicious circle." Jim's drinking affected his earning powers, which in turn made it impossible for Evelyn to have the attractive home she desired, and all incentives to give thought and care to their
"poor" environment were removed by Jim's lack of appreciation
of anything she did; still he used her poor home-making as an
excuse for his excessive use of alcohol.

Laziness was found to have existed in twice as many hus-
bands as wives, and in no instance where the wife had been lazy
did the record indicate that the same had been true of the husband,
thus in a total of fifteen cases, laziness was a factor contributing
to marital discord.

Mental deficiency was found to have existed in thirteen
individuals, and in each instance was noted in the records as appa-
rently contributing to the marital discord, coincident with other
conditions conducive to conflict that were obviously present in
the family situation. The case record of Albert and Louise Clinton
made reference to the fact that although Albert's "mentally unbal-
anced condition" was in all probability the underlying "cause" of
their lack of understanding, there were other factors that had
tended to create unpleasant attitudes between Albert and Louise,
such as his first marriage, a happy one, which had ended with his
wife's death from tuberculosis, and the contrast between it and his
present marriage.

According to him, she had suffered a stroke and been
paralyzed, that they could live apart - he was to pay her $50.00 a
month, $50.00 to be deposited in the bank in her name with a writing home
for the past two months, he had given her nothing and she and the
children had been fed by family members.
CHAPTER IV
ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

In order to give a fuller understanding of the complexity of circumstances found in the records, three illustrative cases will be given which show the family situations at the time of application and give brief accounts of the agency’s contact with the families. These cases were chosen because they are typical of the fifty cases and give sufficient information to illustrate clearly the complexity of circumstances found in this research. The names used in reference to the families are fictitious throughout the study.

The case of Aubrey and Sue Hansell was opened in March, 1930, when Sue telephoned the agency that Aubrey, who had not worked in two months, had left again after having previously deserted and come back.

Aubrey and Sue lived in the same county, had known each other practically all their lives, and Sue felt that she had been in love with Aubrey long before he knew it. After “going together” for a long time, they were married about eighteen years before applying to the agency. There were three children; Kent, age 16; Grace, 14; and Burt, 11.

According to Sue, she and Aubrey had signed an agreement that they would live apart - he was to pay her $100.00 a month, $50.00 to be deposited in the bank in her name twice a month; however, for the past two months, he had given her nothing and she and the children had been fed by Sue’s sister.
It seemed that Aubrey had begun drinking about two years before the worker knew the family; Aubrey also associated with "bad" company, and when on a spree, his language was so vile and his behavior so terrible that Sue made him leave home.

Sue explained to the worker that she still cared for Aubrey, but could not live with him when he behaved as he had for the past few years. Sue was particularly fond of Kent, who threatened to "run away" if his father returned to the home again.

The worker planned to attempt to locate Aubrey, supplying Sue and the children with food in the meantime.

When Sue's sister was interviewed, she spoke disapprovingly of Aubrey's conduct but did not blame him for everything. From her it was learned that they had been secretly married against the wishes of Sue's father, and she believed that Sue would live with Aubrey again as soon as he had work. She did not approve of the idea, asking the worker to persuade Sue if possible to "let him alone."

Aubrey was found working in a garage, and from him the worker learned another side of the story. When he was told that the worker was from the Family Service Society and that his wife had appealed for assistance, he appeared embarrassed, saying that probably Sue had told lies about him and he wanted to present his side of the case. According to Aubrey, it had been most difficult to live with Sue as she had a very high temper and was a most extravagant wife. He agreed to send Sue $10.00 or $15.00, thanking the worker for the Family Service Society's assistance, and saying that he felt it was all unnecessary because if Sue's family had let them alone years before, things would have been much better.
Sue later told the worker that her talk with Aubrey must have done him some good for he called her, saying that if Kent would go to see him he would send her money, but since Kent refused to see his father one of the other children would have to go. However Kent's attitude definitely changed regarding the whole situation as his mother's conduct became more obvious. There was a continuation of unsettled conditions in the home for the next year. In the early part of 1931, Kent stated to the worker that his mother was the direct cause of the situation in the family. He declared that Sue continually nagged the entire family; that the home was always filthy; and that she was a most extravagant person. When Aubrey was making $300.00 a month, she contracted a grocery bill which amounted to $100.00 — she continually charged things to him, running him into debt.

Aubrey and Sue were divorced, later married, but "separated" again after which Sue, according to Kent, started going with another man. They often had "drinking parties" together, Sue would get "drunk", and often went out on the street in that condition. Kent attributed his mother's behavior to her "nerves", stating that his father had hoped to have her sent to an institution so that the other two children might be given a "chance". Kent refused to stay in the home, leaving to live with an aunt.

The agency contacted quite a number of relatives, some of whom stated that Sue was an extremely "nervous" individual, was "high-strung" and easily upset. The worker referred her for a
mental study to determine if she was capable of rearing her
children or if she should have been institutionalized.

Sue refused to attend the nervous and mental clinic after
saying she wanted to, and telephoned the worker that she had changed
her mind and there was no further need for relief.

In December 1931, the case was closed as there had been
no contact with the family since August of the same year.

Russell and Frances Vada were referred to the agency by a
friend in January 1929, as Russell had been out of work for several
months and the family needed assistance.

Russell called at the office to talk to the worker about
his situation and the possibility of his getting work. In 1919
when he was making $40.00 a week he met Frances, who was then
working and making $35.00 a week; they were married after a very
brief courtship. At first things went along all right, but during
the winter Russell would be out of a job frequently as there was
little paper-hanging to be done. The four children came close
together as is shown by their ages; Tom, 8; Bill, 6; Dot, 4; and
Fred, 3. He spoke of being very fond of the children but had little
to say about their training although Frances knew very little about
the raising of a family.

After the worker had visited in the home several times,
Frances would frequently call her because, as she said, she was so
worried and upset that she could not go on unless she could talk
things over with someone who could advise her as she knew that would
threatened to take him to court for non-support.

The worker listened attentively to the tale of one who made her feel much better. In her talks with the worker, she told of her great sadness in 1919 when she lost her only living relatives, leaving her without anyone on whom she could depend. When she first met Russell, she thought him the ugliest man she had ever seen, made fun of him to her friends, claiming that she would rather stay single all her life than marry a man who looked like that; however, after a short time, they were married. They had never been congenial, and Frances persistently nagged Russell regarding their financial condition; she mentioned still doing that and Russell's abusive treatment of her at times.

The worker was aware of the open conflict within the home; from Russell and from her own observation she learned that Frances was lazy and a bad housekeeper. He admitted that his temper was disagreeable when she continually nagged him and that probably he was too impatient with her. When he was working, the family lived on what he made but saved nothing for the times he was unemployed.

Frances was obviously of lower intelligence than her husband; her behavior was almost that of a child at times, leaving practically nothing in which they shared in common. Russell had drifted away from his family years before, but he compared Frances with them and was ashamed of her disposition, her swearing, poor management, and extravagance with the little he earned.

During the latter part of 1930 Russell began "running around" with other women - his excuse was the unhappy home life and his inability to find any satisfaction from his relationship with Frances. His behavior only caused his wife to nag him more; she
threatened to take him to court for non-support.

The worker listened attentively to the tales of woe each took to her, and tried to get each one to be more tolerant and to accept each other in a more natural relationship, than had existed between them. Talking to them separately, the worker explained meanings of marriage of which they apparently had not been aware before. Believing that they both definitely wanted a more normal home-life, the worker encouraged them to work together to bring this about. The children, whom Russell had always adored but had never felt were as much his as Frances' because of her possessive attitude toward them, were used as a means of centering their interests toward common goals. After allowing them to try the plan as had been agreed, the worker then talked to the couple together emphasizing again the importance of understanding all their marriage stood for, what their happiness together meant to the children, and the mutual sacrifices necessary for solidarity of the family. They both appeared as happy as two children with a new game. About this time, Russell became quite ill with an infected foot and was forced to remain in the bed for several weeks. The Family Service Society supplied groceries for the family during that time and the worker made frequent visits to the home. The progress they had made toward better compatibility increased rapidly because Frances tried so hard to manage the children, run the home on the small allowance given them, and nurse Russell at the same time. Her efforts met with approval and praise from her husband, and during his forced stay in the house there developed a great comradeship between him and Tom, then ten years old, and mutual adoration with the other
children.

In December 1931, it was possible to refer the case to the Social Service Bureau for occasional relief. It was necessary at that time to refer to the Bureau cases where unemployment was the only problem then present.

Arthur and Winnie Kimball applied to the agency for assistance in March 1933, saying Arthur had been laid off from work the week before and they had no food or fuel.

Both were about twenty-two years of age, had been married four years and had two children, Virginia and Howard, age three and two years respectively.

They had married after knowing each other about a year and three months, then lived with Winnie's mother, Mrs. Dikison. That was most unsatisfactory for when the young couple argued or fussed, Mrs. Dikison always took the part of her daughter, regardless of the argument. They moved alone for two months, then lived with Arthur's father, Mr. Kimball, but finally decided it was best not to live with relatives.

Virginia was born nine months and three weeks after their marriage and Howard was born one year and four months later. The children were ill quite a bit which made it difficult for them to meet all expenses and try to save anything too.

Winnie did not know how to care for the children and relatives told the worker they should be taken from them since both Arthur and Winnie seemed so irresponsible. Winnie was quick tempered and often aroused anger in Arthur to the point of his ill-treating her.
The family managed to secure support and Arthur seemed to have prospects of employment when the worker learned they had moved but no one knew to where. The case was closed on April 4, 1928, but was reopened on May 31, 1928 when Winnie called at the office, saying she had been sent by the Juvenile Court. She explained that Arthur was supposed to send support but had "skipped" his bond and the court had been unable to find him. It seemed that Winnie went back to her mother's because she and Arthur did not get along at all well together, and then he had finally deserted; he was brought back on a non-support warrant but left, going to another state.

Winnie then applied to the Children's Aid Society to place the children for her. She was working, making $11.00 a week but could not pay for her own expenses, the children's care, and supply milk for them also. She was referred to a day nursery and the case closed in August 1929.

The case was again reopened in September 1929, when Winnie made application for assistance to meet expenses. Arthur had deserted again after being home for awhile - this time he had been gone since July and Winnie wanted to get support for the children since she believed he was working. Winnie failed to keep appointments with the worker and the case was again closed in September 1929 until January 1931, when Arthur and Winnie applied together for assistance, having been sent by the Juvenile Court. The report from the officer at the Court was to the effect that Winnie was more or less of a "street woman" and not at all reliable. Arthur talked with the
worker regarding the advisability of placing the children — he did not want to give them up permanently but wanted to get them away from Winnie of whom he spoke in the same way as the Court officer. His story was that back in 1928 when he and Winnie were separated because they could not get along together, she lived with her mother, keeping the children with her. Everything went nicely so far as he knew until he learned that she was "running around" and not taking the proper care of the children. He had never known her to do anything like that before, but she has not stopped since. Arthur stated there was no unhappiness between them until in 1928 when they began to quarrel over little things such as the money which he was able to give her for the house and the fact that he did some drinking and the climax came when they argued over the discipline of the children. They were separated from 1928 until the Fall of 1930. During that time he was charged with desertion, but has since explained to the Court that he deliberately went off, leaving Winnie and the children in her mother's care where he believed they would not suffer, and that he could make his own way, sending something back to her whenever possible. During the two or more years when he was away from Richmond, he lived a very wild life, "running around," drinking, carousing, but since he had returned to the City and to Winnie about August 1930, he had made every effort to lead a straight life but had been thwarted on every side by Winnie's incorrigible behavior, her neglect of the home and of the children, and her treatment of him. Arthur's account also mentioned that they had thrown things at each other, that he had knocked her
down and that she had struck and slapped him, paying no attention to the children.

Shortly after this they were reported to Court for neglect of the children. When the worker called to tell them of the approaching trial, she suggested that they begin immediately to clean the house, clothe the children, and do the best for them possible. She also brought out that since they both were to blame, they might put all that aside and willingly meet each other half-way in a sort of new agreement.

The Court ordered that Winnie remain in her home, keeping the children and home clean and preparing the meals regularly. If she left home she was to be accompanied by the children or if the children were left in the care of some competent person she was to be accompanied by Arthur. She was in no way to interfere with his going out to look for work; and any violation of the orders issued by the Court would bring the alternative of one year in jail for Winnie, who was thoroughly frightened, agreed to return to her home and to live as she should, and admitted that she had played the fool during the past few months.

For several months the family were happier than they had ever been together. Contact with the agency was continued, during which time some relief was given according to Arthur's periodic unemployment.

In June 1931, Arthur deserted again, explaining to the worker that they had a quarrel and when Winnie told him to go away and never return, he left in a fit of temper but wished then that
he had not gone. A month after that the case was closed because it was not possible to locate the family. After another month, Arthur was again in the office asking about plans to move since he had received notice to vacate. He explained that he had been angry with Winnie when he talked to the worker the last time but that he never intended to leave her again. Neither one was heard from again until February 1932, when Winnie deserted Arthur, going off with a sailor with whom she had been running around for some time.

Arthur was placed under Court order, thereby making him responsible to the extent of $10.00 per week for the support of his children, whom Winnie deserted also when she left. They were to be placed in a boarding home by the Children's Aid Society until such time as Arthur could properly care for them himself.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion it may be repeated that this study deals with but one level of society; therefore it is understood that the results arrived at are not representative of all the facts about marital discord in general. Tentative conclusions in this study regarding the causative factors responsible for the marital discord in these fifty families, and the changes in the marital status of the family resulting from them, will be considered in view of the limited scope of the data.

In the study of these fifty records presenting marital discord, it has been evidenced that there are lines along which further study should be made. The writer feels that such social and economic conditions as are closely related to the well-being of the family in more than one level of society are worthy of exhaustive consideration. It would be of benefit to any social agency if a study could be made of those families in which marital discord has occurred with obvious frequency and persistency through several generations.

"... but a single reason, and marriage frictions most of all perhaps suffer from a multitude as well as a complexity of etiological factors."
The data investigated indicate that:

1. Economic pressure as it affects the individual physically, mentally and emotionally tends to produce conflict in the home and to disrupt marital happiness.

2. Among dependent families, the percentage of desertions is greater than the percentage of divorces.

3. Definite personality distortions, unhappy mental states, as well as overt demonstration result in families in which the marital relationship is not decisively discontinued.

4. Non-support and separation are characteristic of families in this level of society.

5. The educational and occupational achievements of an individual are correlated in that those persons having some education are employed in more favorable fields while those having no education secure only menial labor.

6. Inadequate knowledge of the significance of sex in marriage figures prominently in the unsatisfactory marital relationships.

7. An understanding of cooperative personality interplay is necessary as a part of the marital relationship.

8. This study bears out the following observations:

   "Literally never is human misunderstanding the product of but a single cause, and marriage frictions most of all perhaps, suffer from a multitude as well as a complexity of etiologic factors."

A. Marriage Clinic.

"As matrimonial ventures and childhood experiences become more hazardous as a result of our eight-cylinder civilization, it will become increasingly clear that training for marriage and parenthood rather than a false confidence in the sufficiency of the pairing and parent instincts must be the basis of wholesome home life."

The problem of domestic discord has caught the attention of groups in other localities interested in the social well-being of the community of which they are a part. Both in the United States and Europe a step has been taken in an effort to minimize domestic discord, as a disintegrating factor in society, through the medium of marriage clinics. Whether or not the time has come for the establishment of such an agency in the city of Richmond is debatable. It is the writer's opinion that in the cases represented in this study much might have been accomplished had such an agency as a marriage clinic been available. The worker, in dealing with the family, it can be seen from the records, did from time to time endeavor to interpret to the individuals involved something of the meaning of the marriage relationship and all that it includes. Her efforts were apparently successful in certain cases where the individuals evidenced and voiced appreciation for the guidance and aid in their problems, which had led to a fuller and more satisfying married life. The worker on the Family Service Society staff definitely does not have the time to devote to the family which is required to work out these problems. The very fact that the item of relief must play a important part in the contact with the agency necessarily limits the extent to which the

individuals voluntarily project their difficulties and reveal the underlying cause of their discord. In this age of specialization, such cases as those involving the intricate problems with their complex causes and effects such as have been shown to have been the case in the fifty families studied, would certainly be benefitted much more by contact with a staff equipped especially to deal with these particular phases of the family problem.

Since prevention is sought in the realm of social betterment, the marriage clinic can serve those individuals before they have become parties to a marriage contract and therefore before they are eligible for contact by a family agency such as the Family Service Society. However, whereas the Family Service Society worker has little basis upon which to reach the adolescents in the home in their capacity as potential husbands, wives, and parents, she would be able to bring about a contact between these individuals and the marriage clinic. Further, through the marriage clinic it may be hoped that some of the marriages which it is said afterward, "it never should have been" may be avoided.

*  

"One fundamental claim can be made concerning marital shipwrecks; namely, that the way to prevent many of them would be to see that the marriage never was allowed to take place."

In the marriage clinic can be shown probably more clearly than in any other instrument we have now, the need for the better understanding of personality needs.** "With a swiftness and inevitability that appalls conservative minds, the process of

**Goodsell, W., Problems of the Family, p 101
individualization goes on," and because of its characteristics it needs to be interpreted patiently, cautiously, accurately, and yet scientifically by a personnel definitely prepared for its task.

In Richmond there is a group of socially-minded individuals alert to growing needs and reacting to them. It seems timely that a movement toward organized guidance for marital relationships be introduced by this group, already shown to be wise and open-minded in its consideration of the social well-being of the community. If this study should prove of assistance in giving voice to the evidenced need for such a movement, it will aid in a valuable phase of social progress in Richmond.

Authoritative individuals who frankly admit defects or deficiencies in the monogamic family as it exists in the present day have expressed belief in progressive social means for remediating these evils in present marriage and family relationships.

* "This group does not fear change, because it knows that change is the mark of vitality; its fear is of stagnation, the sign manual of death."


* Goodsell, W., Problems of the Family, p 438
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