

SOCIOLOGY

# Marriage Rate, Business Trend, Found to Be Closely Parallel

## Modern Youths Quicker to Take Advantage of Economic Recoveries Than Their Grandfathers Were, Study Shows

**S**WEET romance and its aftermath, marriage, have a business-like basis in that the number of marriages in the United States closely follows the trend of business conditions, a study by statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company reveals.

Marriages have closely followed the curve of business failures and prosperity since 1868, going down with hard times and up with good, a graph prepared by the company shows.

Based on a study of marriage rates in New York City, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan and Rhode Island, the chart reveals extremely close correspondence between the number of bankruptcies and marriages, particularly in recent years.

### Years of Depression

The curve of marriages indicates that 1878, 1884, 1893, 1896, 1907-8, 1921-2 and 1932 were years of black depression for the United States, a fact confirmed by reference to business charts.

Marriages did not follow the trend of business conditions at only one time during the 67-year period covered by the survey. The year 1918 was a poor year for Cupid but a special factor, American participation in the World War and the universal draft, acted to draw off a large number of eligible young males from participation in civil life.

"Upon reflection," it is remarked in the survey, "it is rather natural that there should be close relation between the marriage rate and business conditions. For not only will young people be restrained from marrying in times of economic stress, either through prudence or through actual necessity; but there results in depression years an accumulation of marriageable men and women who form a reservoir from which, in the following years of improved business, an additional batch of marriages ensues. To some extent this argument applies to other social reactions to varying business conditions also, but it is probably more definite and more marked in the case of marriages."

A one- or two-year lag between marriage and bankruptcy occurred in the earlier part of the period covered in the study, but this lag has tended to disappear in recent years.

### "Wait Three Years"

Love at first sight may be successful enough in fiction, but in real life it is more likely to be an unhappy marriage that follows a precipitate wedding. This is revealed by figures from the Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles reported in *Social Forces*.

Wait two years before engagement and another year before marriage, is the advice that might be gleaned from the report by Dr. Paul Popenoe, director of the Institute, and Miss Donna Wicks Neptune, who have studied 374 unhappy couples as compared with 436 having "run-of-the-mill" happiness.

The unhappy couples knew each other for an average of 20 months before engagement and then were engaged for about seven and a half months. The other couples waited longer. They were acquainted for 28 months before engagement and for more than a year of betrothal before marriage. Nearly 20 per cent. were acquainted for more than five years before they became engaged.

### Married in Haste

Marriages on the spur of the moment "without any engagement" occurred eight times as often among the unhappy couples as among those that turned out better. These were not "marriage at sight" for the couples had known each other for a year or two and then suddenly made up their minds to marry. Perhaps the reason was instability, perhaps coercion. At any rate they turned out badly, the investigators report. There were 140 of the unhappy couples in this "no engagement" group.

Five of the unhappy couples report "love at first sight," for these had no period of acquaintance before engagement. But they waited then for one month to 11 months before marrying.

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### GOING, GOING, GONE!

*A vivid lesson in soil erosion is afforded by three comparison plots of prairie grassland studied by Prof. J. E. Weaver of the University of Nebraska. The middle plot was partly denuded, the lower one completely so, by over-grazing and trampling. Then all three were exposed to attack by water, in the same intensity. The pictures tell their own story.*

ASTRONOMY

## Declares Dust in Space Composed of Metal Bits

**V**AST clouds of dark matter in interstellar space, that obscure some stars and redden the light of others, are composed largely of iron and aluminum, is the conclusion of Dr. B. Sticker, of Bonn University observatory. He estimates the diameter of particles as averaging one ten-thousandth of a millimeter, or one two-hundred-thousandth of an inch.

Dr. Sticker agrees with astronomers in the United States in the opinion that this dark, "unorganized" matter in space makes up a very considerable fraction of the material universe.

*Science News Letter, August 20, 1938*