

Marriage in Korea

I. Evidence of Changing Attitudes and Practice

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This, the first of three papers on marriage in Korea, will describe attitudes of Korean women toward marriage and compare these with the actual practice of the husband and wife. The second paper will describe the rise in age of marriage and will examine selected correlates of this phenomenon in an effort to determine their ability to explain variations in age at marriage. The third article will study the relationship of age at marriage, family planning practice, and other variables to fertility (Kim, 1974a, 1974b).

Most previous efforts to elucidate the reasons for or prospects of changing fertility have utilized the familiar KAP type of study knowledge of, attitudes toward, and practice of family planning. These papers attempt to make a detailed study of factors influencing age at marriage in a less developed society and the relative importance of changing marriage patterns versus contraception in affecting fertility. It is

probable that other developing societies also will experience similar major changes in marriage patterns as they move toward industrialization, urbanization, and improved standards of living.

Factors which are usually associated with high fertility were dominant in Korea until the end of World War II. These included a society that was largely agricultural, illiterate, and of low socio-economic status, early and nearly universal marriage, an extended family structure, the concept that wives have a duty to give sons to husband and clan, concubinage, lack of old age security, and a relative absence of contraception and abortion.

Factors which are believed to have supported a change in fertility in the past three decades included rapid industrialization, socio-economic growth, increasing emancipation of women, and increases in contraceptive services and abortion.

SAMPLE

The respondents interviewed as the chief source of data for this study were from three selected areas: Rural Kosam, population 3,998; semi-urban Ansung, population 23,556; and urban Seoul, population 4,776,928, as of December 1969 (Ansung, 1970, Seoul, 1970).

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Within judgementally selected sub-areas, systematic random sampling was used to select 739 households in Seoul and 746 in Ansung; all 690 households in Kosam were included. About 80% of the selected households were located and interviews completed to determine presence of women aged 17~50 years, these being the potential respondents. Failure to complete this initial contact was due to the selected household's having moved away(39%), refusals(6%), and failures to contact household (54%). Full interviews were completed with 90.4% of the eligible women in households where the initial interview had found such women. The predominantly young never married women were the more difficult to locate and had an 81% response rate versus a 94% response for ever married.

The total of completed interviews is 597 for Kosam, 551 for Ansung, and 643 for Seoul, totalling 1791 cases. Exclusions are given in footnotes.

METHOD

A questionnaire was designed and pretested to obtain information about:

- (1) Background characteristics,
- (2) Attitudes toward marriage and reproduction,
- (3) Marriage practices,
- (4) Reproduction and family planning practice.

The questionnaire was pretested several times, and administered by fifteen trained and experienced interviewers under supervision of the senior author and three qualified supervisors. Preliminary calls were made to obtain the support of local officials and leaders. Radio and television announcements were made in Seoul to inform the public and to elicit cooperation. Also, an official letter of explanation was sent to each household. At the end of each

day's work, problems were discussed and finished schedules were checked; those with inadequate information were reassigned.

A random sample of 15% of respondents were reinterviewed 10 to 15 days after the original interview and were again asked 60% of the original questions to check repeatability of responses. Comparing original with reinterview responses on the selected questions, repeatability was studied in terms of several indices of inconsistency. Indices ranged from those assessing extent of individual respondent-question inconsistency to measures of change in estimates of average values. In general, the findings were that respondents did not change their answers markedly and no significant directional change was observed. Detailed material on repeatability is elaborated in Kim, 1972.

Each interview schedule was independently coded by two persons and the results compared. Any disagreements were corrected.

RESULTS

I. Attitudes of Respondents to Marriage

Traditional attitudes about marriage have been largely in accordance with Confucius' teaching that filial piety is the greatest virtue and that the most unfilial act is to be without descendants. Woman is subservient and not educated. Marriage is a contract not for love but for lineage; marriage is a prerequisite to full adult status. Marriages are arranged by parents, without need or obligation to consult with the persons to be married. With the end of the Japanese occupation and exposure to western culture since 1945, many Koreans have made a gradual shift toward more contemporary attitudes to marriage.

The questions about attitude were designed to find out what proportion of the population held the traditional views and the extent and direc-

tion of shifts toward more contemporary views. Seven groups of attitudinal questions were constructed as follows:

- (a) Should one marry or not?
- (b) Why should one marry?
- (c) Who should select husband?
- (d) Who should decide when to marry?
- (e) Ranking of important criteria in wife's selection of husband
- (f) Ranking of important criteria in husband's selection of wife as perceived by wife
- (g) Ideal age for marriage

In general, each group of questions was designed to elicit a range of possible responses from the strongly traditional to the contemporary.

The tables show the range of answers under each grouping.

The underlying hypotheses had minor variations by group, but in general they were as follows:

- (1) Urban populations will have more contemporary attitudes than rural
- (2) Urban rural differences disappear when education is controlled
- (3) Education and a more contemporary attitude are positively related
- (4) Never married women are more liberal

(contemporary) than ever married

(5) Younger women are more liberal than older ones

A. Should one marry or not?

The four categories into which the replies are grouped correspond to those presented to the respondents in Korean language by the interviewers and were further explained as follows:

1. One must marry: Something that has to be done; there is no personal option.
2. One preferably should marry: In general marriage is most desirable, almost a duty, but some personal option is possible.
3. One may marry or not: The decision depends on the individual's philosophy of life-complete free option.
4. One should not marry: Marriage is a burden, one should be celibate.

The findings are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Another tabulation, not presented, showed that those with more contemporary attitudes were younger, the average age of those in category 1 was 36 years versus 30 years for those who said that one should have complete free option. In sum, hypotheses 1, 3, 4, and 5 are supported by the first three tables. Hypothesis

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Responses for "Should One Marry or Not?" by Study Area*
(Focus on Between-Area Comparisons)

| "Should One Marry or Not?" (N) | Study Area | | | Total (1785) |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Kosam (595) | Ansung (551) | Seoul (639) | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 1. "One must marry" | 49 | 43 | 41 | 44 |
| 2. "One preferably should marry" | 31 | 43 | 45 | 40 |
| 3. "Marriage depends on one's philosophy of life" | 13 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 4. "One should not marry" | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5 |

$$\chi^2=33.68, 6 \text{ d.f.}, p<.001$$

*These rural-urban differences persisted with minor variations when the respondents were divided into <7th grade ($p<.01$) and 7th-12th grade education ($p<.005$).

Note: Six exclusions are made due to response "don't know" or answers which were not classifiable.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Responses for "Should One Marry or Not?" by Study Area and Education (Focus on Within-Area Comparisons by Education)

| "Should One Marry or Not?" (N) Total | Kosam | | Ansung | | Seoul | | | Total | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B | C | A | B | C |
| | (524) | (69) | (375) | (163) | (130) | (333) | (176) | (1029) | (565) | (186) |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 1. "One must marry" | 52 | 35 | 44 | 41 | 49 | 41 | 34 | 48 | 40 | 34 |
| 2. "One preferably should marry" | 31 | 32 | 44 | 42 | 39 | 45 | 51 | 36 | 43 | 51 |
| 3. "Marriage depends on one's philosophy of life" | 11 | 28 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 12 |
| 4. "One should not marry" | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| | $\chi^2=22.113$ | | $\chi^2=2.645$ | | $\chi^2=20.271$ | | | $\chi^2=26.394$ | | |
| | 4 d.f. | | 4 d.f. | | 4 d.f. | | | 6 d.f. | | |
| | p<.005 | | p>.50 | | p<.005 | | | p<.005 | | |

Note: A=0~6th grade; B=7th~12th grade; C=More than 12th grade. The few with more than 12th grade in Kosam and Ansong are not shown by place of residence, but are included in the total. Five unknown education are excluded; and see footnote for Table 1 for other exclusions.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Responses for "Should One Marry or Not?" by Marital Status*

| "Should One Marry or Not?" (N) Total | Ever Married (1387) 100 | Never Married (398) 100 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. "One must marry" | 49 | 29 |
| 2. "One preferably should marry" | 37 | 49 |
| 3. "Marriage depends on one's philosophy of life" | 9 | 16 |
| 4. "One should not marry" | 5 | 6 |
| | $\chi^2=54.451$ | |
| | 3 d.f. | |
| | p<0.005 | |

*The marital status differentials persisted in each study area, with a p<0.005 in Kosam and Seoul, and p<0.05 in Ansong.

Note: See footnote for Table 1 for exclusions.

2 is rejected, see footnote to Table 1.

Table 2 and other evidence to be presented later indicate that education is a potent predictor of attitudes toward marriage. The differences by educational groups are fairly consistent in every area although they do not reach statistical significance in Ansong.

B. Chief reason for marriage

The four categories of response are again arranged in order from traditional to liberal or contemporary. The category definitions in Tables 4 and 5 are self-explanatory. Each respondent was recorded only once and so gave her

"chief" reason for marriage. Table 4 shows that a majority still opt for the traditional reasons of custom and procreation, although the proportion for procreation is less in Seoul.

Love is the chief reason twice as often in urban as in rural areas. Education is a significant factor in a more liberal attitude in all areas, Table 5.

Other tables not presented showed that 19% of the never married groups gave love as their primary reason versus 3% of the ever married.

The age distribution generally followed the expected pattern: Those who opted for "procreation and universal custom" averaged 36 years

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Reasons for "Why Should One Marry?" by Study Area*
(Focus on Between-Area Comparisons)

| "Why Should One Marry?" (N) Total | Study Area | | | Total (1494)** 100 |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| | Kosam (479) 100 | Ansung (472) 100 | Seoul (543) 100 | |
| 1. "Universal custom; no option" | 39 | 40 | 33 | 39 |
| 2. "Procreation to assure family name" | 19 | 18 | 13 | 17 |
| 3. "Economic security" | 8 | 12 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. "Companion not to be lonely" | 27 | 23 | 29 | 26 |
| 5. "Love" | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 6. "Other" | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |

$\chi^2=23.8663$, 10 d.f., $p < .01$

*Tables not presented show that study area differentials disappear for those with less than 7th grade education, $p > .10$; but persist for those with education to 7th grade or above.

**Excludes 96 who said "should not marry," 194 who gave irrelevant answers, and 7 who either gave no response or "didn't know."

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Reasons for "Why Should One Marry?" by Study Area and Education (Focus on Within-Area Comparisons by Education)

| "Why Should One Marry?" (N) Total | Kosam (425) (44) | | Ansung (322) (128) | | Seoul (112) (272) (144) | | | Total* (859) (444) (152) | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| | A 100 | B 100 | A 100 | B 100 | A 100 | B 100 | C 100 | A 100 | B 100 | C 100 |
| 1. "Universal custom; no option" | 41 | 27 | 44 | 33 | 37 | 42 | 38 | 42 | 38 | 38 |
| 2. "Procreation to assure family name" | 21 | 9 | 21 | 15 | 21 | 14 | 7 | 21 | 14 | 7 |
| 3. "Economic security" | 8 | 14 | 9 | 23 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 14 | 7 |
| 4. "Companion not to be lonely" | 27 | 34 | 23 | 20 | 35 | 27 | 31 | 27 | 26 | 31 |
| 5. "Love" | 3 | 16 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 7 | 18 | 2 | 9 | 18 |
| | $\chi^2=18.462$ 4 d.f. $p < .005$ | | $\chi^2=32.379$ 4 d.f. $p < .005$ | | $\chi^2=39.094$ 8 d.f. $p < .005$ | | | $\chi^2=96.430$ 8 d.f. $p < .005$ | | |

Note: A=0~6th grade; B=7th~12th grade; C=More than 12th grade.

*Excludes those excluded from Table 4, 3 cases who were unknown as to education, and 36 whose responses to the question were not classifiable (called "other" in Table 4).

old, those who gave "love" were 26 years old with those opting for economic security in between at 32 years. It was mildly surprising that the average age of those who said "companionship" was 35 years; our expectation was for a younger age in this group. However, the findings provide general support for the hypotheses.

C. Who should select husband?

The options presented in Tables 6 and 7

have special interest because the aspirations or "ideals" expressed here can later be compared with who actually made the decisions when the respondents did marry.

As already noted, marriage in Korea prior to 1945 was invariably arranged; the chief considerations were family lineage and social status, money and power advantages plus a great sense of parental responsibility to have child married. The recent introduction of more contemporary value systems is expected to be responsible for

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Responses for "Who Should Select Husband?" by Study Area*
(Focus on Between-Area Comparisons)

| "Who should Select Husband?" | Study Area | | | Total |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| | Kosam | Ansung | Seoul | |
| (N) Total | (594) 100 | (550) 100 | (639) 100 | (1783)** |
| 1. "Parent should select alone" | 11 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| 2. "Parent to select and ask consent of the one who will marry" | 45 | 47 | 42 | 44 |
| 3. "The one who will marry select and get permission from parents" | 37 | 40 | 53 | 43 |
| 4. "The one who will marry should select alone" | 7 | 7 | 4 | 6 |

$\chi^2=73.60, 6 \text{ d.f.}, p<.001$

*The area differences are no longer statistically significant when examined by educational groups less than 7th grade and 7th grade plus; thus supporting the second hypothesis.

**Excludes 6 unknowns and 2 whose answers were unclassifiable.

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Responses for "Who Should Select Husband?" by Education*
(Focus on Within-Area Comparisons by Education)

| "Who Should Select Husband?" | All Areas Combined** | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | A | B | C |
| (N) Total | (1025) 100 | (568) 100 | (185) 100 |
| 1. "Parent should select alone" | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. "Parent to select and ask consent of the one who will marry" | 49 | 38 | 36 |
| 3. "The one who will marry select and get permission from parents" | 33 | 56 | 60 |
| 4. "The one who will marry should select alone" | 7 | 5 | 4 |

$\chi^2=146.445, 6 \text{ d.f.}, p<.005$

Note: A=0~6th grade; B=7th~12th grade; C=More than 12th grade.

*The same pattern persists and $p<.005$ when the data for Kosam, Ansung, and Seoul are examined separately.

**Excludes those excluded from Table 6 and 5 with unknown education.

substantial changes. It has been reported that Western style dating is becoming popular and that increasing numbers of young Koreans are defying traditional marriage customs (Lee, H. J., 1965, Ministry of Public Information and Culture, 1969).

The results in Tables 6 and 7 support the first three hypotheses. Nearly 60% of the 7th ~12th grade and college groups said that the one who will marry shall take the lead in mate selection and then get parental permission. Almost 90% of all respondents chose the two middle-of-the-road options which call for joint parent-child participation, and only 6% opted

for either the extreme "traditional" or "liberal" alternatives.

The never married again are more "liberal" than the ever married; 60% and 40% of them, respectively, favor option 3, that the one who marries should select and then obtain permission. The age distribution is generally as hypothesized: Those who opted for mate selection by parents alone averaged 37.5 years versus 35 and 32 years for the increasingly liberal options 2 and 3. But the pattern is reversed by the relatively small number, 103, who chose option 4—selection solely by the one who will marry—they averaged 34 years of age. With the

exception of this irregularity in age trend, all the hypotheses are supported.

D. Who should decide when to marry?

Traditionally, Korean parents have decided when to marry; this has been supported by the cultural patterns described and also by the youthfulness of most brides who averaged 16 years in 1925 and probably were even younger before that time. The findings, not shown, generally support all the hypotheses except number 2: that geographical differences would disappear if education is controlled.

E. Criteria for selection of husband

Respondents were asked to give the first, second, and third most important criterion for selection of husband. Only the first or most important criterion is analyzed due to limited repeatability of responses to the second and third criteria (Kim, 1972).

The first grouping of criteria (lineage, custom, religion, occupation, and property) is the traditional one and the percent selecting this is reasonably stable, Table 8. The second grouping (personality, sophistication and appearance, age, talents, etc.) probably has universal appeal although the percent selecting this group-

ing decreases as the population becomes more urban and as education increases (data not shown). Health and education are shown separately; the relatively high priority given to health and the low emphasis on education are noteworthy; both are stable from area to area.

Love is the criterion at the contemporary or liberal end of the spectrum and the greater selection of love by urban respondents is believed to be indicative of a trend. The frequency of choosing love as the first priority is directly related to education. It is given first place by only 4% of the elementary school groups, by 16% of the 7th~12th grade, and by 23% of the college groups. Twenty-one percent of the never married put love first versus 6% of the ever married. The age distribution shows the expected patterns. All hypotheses are supported except number 2: That geographic differences will disappear when education is held constant.

F. Criteria for selection of wife

Respondents also were asked the most important criteria for selection of a wife "if you were a man." The trends are similar to those observed in Table 8 and other tabulations with the not-surprising difference that the priority placed on personality, sophistication, and appea-

Table 8. Percentage Distribution of the Most Important Criterion in Selection of Husband by Study Area

| Criteria (N) Total | Study Area | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Kosam (597) 100 | Ansung (547) 100 | Seoul (639) 100 | All Areas* (1783) 100 |
| 1. Family lineage, custom and religion, occupation, and property | 22 | 29 | 19 | 23** |
| 2. Personality, sophistication and appearance, age, talents, etc. | 48 | 37 | 34 | 40 |
| 3. Health | 18 | 23 | 22 | 21 |
| 4. Education | 6 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 5. Love | 5 | 6 | 17 | 10 |

$$\chi^2=97.744, 8 \text{ d.f.}, p<.005$$

*Excludes 8 cases with criterion unknown.

**Property and occupation=15% of this total.

rance is greatly increased. The usually rural-urban, education and marital status trends are present and especially love is given increasing priority among the urban and highly educated (Kim, 1972).

G. Ideal age at marriage

Bayer (1969) reports that expected age at marriage was the best single predictor among four independent variables of actual age at marriage in a USA study.

Several Korean studies, including this one, show a four-year rise in ideal age of marriage from 1958 to 1970 among rural women, and a smaller rise of about one year for urban women. The current mean and median ideal age of marriage for all areas and all education groups is 24 to 25 years for women. There is no relationship between ideal age at marriage and age cohort or marital status. In general, hypotheses related to ideal age at marriage are unsupported.

Many Koreans believe that ideal age of marriage for Korean women has reached a ceiling (Yang, 1966). Partly this is the result of Korean culture which traditionally prescribes a short and inflexible period of marriageability for women as compared to a longer or more flexible period of marriageability for men. Other evidence for this view is that younger women in our sample give a lower ideal age for marriage as their opinion at interview as compared to their recollected ideal age before marriage. Also, the trend in age of marriage which has been upward for fifty years appears to be plateauing (Kim, 1973a).

II. Knowledge of Legal Marriageable Ages

Raising the legal age of marriage has been proposed as a method of population control (Coale, 1961; Basavarajappa, 1967; Davis, 1967).

It was decided to determine respondents' awareness of existing laws on age of marriage in order to get information about difficulties to be anticipated and success to be expected by such a change in laws.

Current minimum marriageable age is 18 and 16 completed years for men and women, respectively. Men under 27 and women under 23 years must obtain consent of parents or guardian (Lee, K.S., 1965; Korean Legal Center, 1969).

Only 4% of respondents knew the legal marriageable age with and without parental permission. This implies that Koreans are not accustomed to thinking about legal barriers to marriage and that present laws have little impact on age at marriage. As will be shown in a subsequent paper (Kim, 1973a), the actual average age of marriage has risen substantially above the legal ages.

III. Who Marries Whom?

It has been said that people tend to marry people who are in various social ways like themselves. Davis and Blake, and other authors observed in the United States that the similarities included (1) race, (2) religion, (3) socioeconomic and educational status, (4) age, (5) previous marital status, and (6) residential proximity (in Berelson, 1964).

This section gives data on who married whom. It also allows some comparisons between respondent's first criterion for selecting a husband as of survey and husband's status related to the criterion at the time of marriage.

A. Education

Marriage-education patterns are greatly influenced by the fact that many more men than women have obtained high levels of education. The educational level of all study marriages is

Table 9. Percent of Marriages Between Wives and Husbands of Various Educational Groupings at Marriage by Study Area

| Educational Level of Wife Years | Education of Husband | | | | | | | | | | | | All Areas | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|------|-----|-----------|-----|------|-----|
| | Kosam | | | | Ansung | | | | Seoul | | | | All Areas | | | |
| | No. | 13+ | 7~12 | 0~6 | No. | 13+ | 7~12 | 0~6 | No. | 13+ | 7~12 | 0~6 | No. | 13+ | 7~12 | 0~6 |
| 13+ | 0 | — | — | — | 2 | 50 | 0 | 50 | 98 | 97 | 2 | 1 | 100 | 96 | 2 | 2 |
| 7~12 | 25 | 28 | 52 | 20 | 86 | 38 | 60 | 1 | 231 | 64 | 36 | — | 342 | 55 | 43 | 2 |
| 0~6 | 466 | 2 | 20 | 78 | 353 | 3 | 30 | 68 | 127 | 6 | 54 | 41 | 946 | 3 | 28 | 70 |

Excludes 401 never married and 2 cases with education of spouse not known.

Table 10. Percent of Marriages Between Couples of Various Economic Backgrounds by Area

| Economic Level of Wife's Home at or Before Marriage | Economic Level of Husband at Marriage | | | | | | | | | | | | All Areas | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|
| | Kosam* | | | | Ansung** | | | | Seoul*** | | | | All Areas | | | |
| | No. | U | M | L | No. | U | M | L | No. | U | M | L | No. | U | M | L |
| Upper | 50 | 45 | 43 | 12 | 62 | 47 | 47 | 7 | 117 | 55 | 40 | 5 | 229 | 50 | 43 | 7 |
| Middle | 287 | 9 | 78 | 12 | 273 | 8 | 78 | 13 | 277 | 7 | 90 | 3 | 837 | 8 | 81 | 10 |
| Lower | 148 | 4 | 24 | 71 | 101 | 4 | 28 | 68 | 40 | 12 | 37 | 51 | 289 | 5 | 27 | 69 |

Excludes 401 never married.

*Excludes 7 cases for lack of information re one of spouses.

**Excludes 6 cases for lack of information re one of spouses.

***Excludes 22 cases for lack of information re one of spouses.

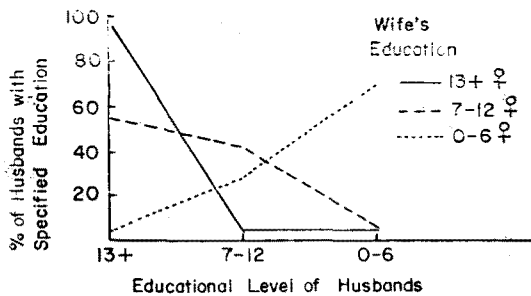


Fig. 1. Graph of Table 9 data for all areas combined.

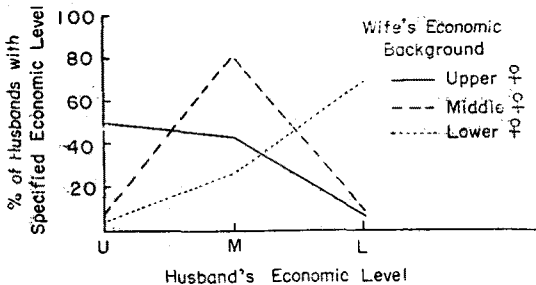


Fig. 2. Graph of Table 10 data for all areas combined.

shown in Table 9 and Figure 1.

Highly educated women almost always marry highly educated men. Women with high school education mostly marry above or in their own educational level. Poorly educated women generally marry poorly educated partners, but nearly one-third marry at higher levels.

Korean women have a strong upward mobility in marrying husbands of higher education than themselves. Each educational group of women, except of course the highest, has more persons who are upwardly mobile than who marry at their own level.

The degree of educational mobility is greatest in urban Seoul and least in rural Kosam. In every area 96% or more of all marriages outside the wife's own level is upward. Urban Seoul is not only the place where a college girl is most likely to marry a college level husband—97%, and where a 7th-12th grade girl will find a 7th-12th grade or college mate—100%—but also the place where girls with lesser edu-

education are most likely to marry upward.

The husband's educational level was greater than his spouse's in 65% of couples; in only 3% was it less.

B. Economic status

Table 10 and Figure 2 show that each economic class tends to marry within its own group; this is most likely in the middle class (81%), next most likely in the lowest economic group (69%), and least common in the upper class (50%).

The degree of economic mobility in marriage, marrying outside one's own class, for the upper and middle categories is least in urban Seoul and greatest in rural Kosam. The opposite holds for the lower class whose mobility is greatest in Seoul and least in Kosam. Seoul is paradoxically the best place for a lower class girl to find a richer husband and also the best place for parents of upper and middle class girls to find upper and middle economic level husbands for their daughters. But the small number of lower class wives in the Seoul sample makes one hesitate to generalize.

C. Comparison of background residence of couples

Proximity of residence traditionally has been an important factor in mate selection (Bassared, 1932; Davie, 1939; Koh, 1963) especially in rural areas with limited transport facilities.

As transportation improves, this factor becomes less important. It is clear that propinquity or at least a common residential background has been a major factor in mate selection in the study samples, Table 11 and Figure 3. About 75% of women from both urban and rural backgrounds married men from similar areas, and 50% of women from semi-urban backgrounds found semi-urban mates.

The proportion with a common background was highest in Kosam, 83%; it was 70% in Seoul, and 53% in Ansung. In all areas 85% to 90% of women married men who had either the same or a more urban background than the wife. This is consistent with the known trend to urbanization. These observations should not obscure the fact that Korea has been and still is predominately rural. Almost three-fifths of the study couples come from rural backgrounds despite the fact that the sample was se-

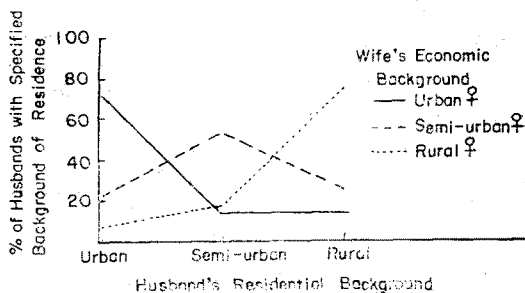


Fig. 3. Graph of Table 11 data for all areas combined.

Table 11. Percent of Marriages Between Couples from Various Residential Backgrounds by Area

| Residential Background of Wife | Residential Background of Husband at Marriage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----|-----|----|--------|----|-----|----|--------|----|-----|----|-----------|----|-----|----|
| | Kosam | | | | Ansung | | | | Seoul* | | | | All Areas | | | |
| | No. | U | S-U | R | No. | U | S-U | R | No. | U | S-U | R | No. | U | S-U | R |
| Urban | 47 | 35 | 5 | 60 | 43 | 35 | 47 | 19 | 285 | 86 | 10 | 4 | 375 | 73 | 14 | 14 |
| Semi-Urban | 37 | 3 | 8 | 89 | 123 | 15 | 70 | 15 | 56 | 46 | 46 | 7 | 216 | 21 | 53 | 26 |
| Rural | 408 | 3 | 2 | 96 | 276 | 3 | 48 | 50 | 114 | 33 | 6 | 61 | 798 | 7 | 18 | 75 |

Excludes 401 never married.

*Excludes 1 case for lack of information re one of spouses.

lected so as to have two-thirds of its respondents living in urban or semi-urban areas. The influence of this rural background should be kept in mind as one considers the effects of the rapid trend to urbanization.

D Relative number of couples' siblings at marriage

A large number of siblings in the husband's family is viewed as an economic burden by a potential wife or her family because the Korean family life code requires that a son support his brothers and sisters until they can be self-supporting. Neglect of this duty is a grave sin. The findings in the study group were as follows:

| <u>Number of Siblings</u> | <u>Percent of Couples</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Husband and wife each had same number | 16 |
| Husband had more siblings than wife | 35 |
| Husband had fewer siblings than wife | 49 |

There were no geographic differences. It is clear that Korean women or their parents consistently prefer husbands with fewer siblings.

E. Religious background of couples

The impressive fact is that in 83% of marriages the husband and wife had the same religious background. As might be expected, this compatibility was greatest among those who followed the traditional patterns of Confucianism or Buddhism and least among those where one partner was a Christian.

F. Age differentials

The traditional and current pattern is for the husband to be older than the wife. The husband is older than his wife in 89% of study marriages, and the same age in 8%. The mean difference between bride and groom is 4.2 years, ranging from a high of 4.9 in Kosam to 3.4 in Seoul.

Table 12 is a summary of some of the observations on who married whom and a comparison of these with the relative priority given in Table 8 as criterion in selecting a husband.

Education of the husband has not been and still is not a very high priority among Korean women, perhaps because the vast majority must marry husbands of their own or higher level. It seems likely that education of the spouse will become a more important criterion as the educational level of women increases.

IV. Marriage Arrangements and Kinds of Weddings

Here, again, there is opportunity to compare woman's view of how these matters should be arranged with that did happen in the respondent's own marriage. A comparison between "attitude" and "practice" toward selection of husband suggests that the former is far more contemporary or liberal than the latter. Table 13 shows that parents alone made the decision in over 60% of marriages and took the leading

Table 12. Comparison of Respondents' Priority Criteria for Selecting Husband and Proportion Marrying Husband with Same or Higher Status Than Her Own

| | Giving Specified Factor First Priority Among Criteria for Selecting Husband | Marrying Husband Whose Relative Status at Marriage Was: | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|
| | | H=W | H>W* | H=or>W |
| | | % | % | % |
| Education | 6 | 32 | 65 | 97 |
| Economic level | 15 | 58 | 21 | 79 |

*H>W means husband's education or economic level was greater than wife's.

Table 13. Comparison of Respondent's Views as to Who Should Select Husband with Her Report of Who Did Select Her Own Husband

| | Who Should Select | Who Did Select |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | % | % |
| Parents alone | 6 | 62 |
| Parents, and ask respondent's consent | 44 | 23 |
| Respondents, and get parents' permission | 44 | 10 |
| Respondents alone | 6 | 4 |

Table 14. Percentage Distribution of Marriage Arrangements by Study Areas

| "Who Selected Husband?" | Kosam (Myun) | Ansung (Eup) | Seoul (City) | Total |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|
| (N) | (492) | (442) | (456) | (1390) |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 1. Parent selected alone | 78 | 64 | 44 | 62 |
| 2. Parent selected and asked consent | 12 | 23 | 35 | 23 |
| 3. Respondent selected and got permission from parents | 6 | 8 | 16 | 10 |
| 4. Respondent selected | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| 5. Others | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

$$\chi^2=166.0539, 8 \text{ d.f.}, p<.001$$

Excludes 401 never married.

role in 85%, although the proportions of women favoring such arrangements were only 6% and 40%, respectively. In a tabulation not shown, it is seen that less than 1% of women with 7th grade or above education expressed the view that parents alone should select her husband, but over two-thirds of such women had marriages where the parent took sole or major role.

Further details are given in Tables 14 and 15 which show a significant area difference: The more urban and more educated respondents were more likely to be consulted by their parents. But even in Seoul, only 20% of respondents did take the leading role in selection.

Education appears to be the major factor in a changing situation. The parents played the major role in over 90% of all marriages in all areas (both urban and rural) for the educational group 0~6 grade. The relative role of respondents and spouses increased progressively as

more education was acquired.

The age differentials were as expected. Wives whose husband was selected by the parent had an average age of 40 as compared to 32 years for the group who reported that "I selected and got permission from parents." These findings suggest that the attitudes of the study groups are substantially more liberal than were the arrangements to which they were subject; if recent upward trends in socio-economic status and urbanization continue, then it seems probable that the observed changes will continue as the children of the respondents move toward marriage.

Traditional Korean wedding ceremonies are still the pattern of 70% of marriages, and most all of the others are "modern" or western style. There are significant rural-urban differences. Over 90% of marriages in rural Kosam are traditional, 80% in Ansung, and only 40% in Seoul. A small number, especially in Seoul,

Table 15. Percentage Distribution of Marriage Arrangements by Education

| "Who Selected Husband?" | Kosam | | Ansung | | Seoul | | | All Study Areas* | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B | C | A | B | C |
| (N) | (457) | (25) | (351) | (83) | (127) | (230) | (99) | (935) | (338) | (104) |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 1. Parent selected alone | 83 | 16 | 73 | 30 | 84 | 35 | 12 | 80 | 33 | 12 |
| 2. Parent selected and asked consent | 11 | 44 | 21 | 36 | 12 | 44 | 43 | 15 | 42 | 43 |
| 3. Respondent selected and got permission from parents | 4 | 36 | 4 | 27 | 2 | 14 | 37 | 4 | 19 | 39 |
| 4. Respondent selected | 2 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 7 |
| | $\chi^2=71.631,$ 2d.f., $p<0.01$ | | $\chi^2=73.673,$ 3d.f., $p<0.01$ | | $\chi^2=148.727,$ 6d.f., $p<0.01$ | | | $\chi^2=393.415,$ 6d.f., $p<0.01$ | | |

Note: A=0~6th grade; B=7th~12th grade; C=Over 12th grade.

*Thirteen cases excluded as unclassifiable (called "other" in Table 14) and 401 never married.

have both.

SUMMARY

Seven aspects of attitude toward marriage in Korea are examined to better understand present and future marriage patterns. Also, various facets of current marriage practice are compared with attitudes.

The study comprises three groups of roughly 600 women each, selected by random sampling from a rural, an urban, and a semi-urban area. A carefully designed and pretested questionnaire was checked for reliability by a reinterview in a 15% subsample.

The great majority of Korean women support traditional attitudes that one must or should marry. The small group who recommend that one should not marry are mostly the very young or the never married, whose attitudes still may change. However, there are important and probably predictive shifts in favor of more individual decision, especially among the better educated, the young, and the more urban.

Traditional reasons for marriage such as "custom" and procreation are ranked first by a majority, but there is a large shift to more contemporary or liberal desire for companion-

ship and love, also primarily among the better educated, the urban, the young, and the never married.

The traditional attitude that parents should have the sole or major role in mate selection is still held by a bare majority; the educated, urban, young, and never married are more liberal. Only 6% opt for each of the two extremes: That the parent alone or the respondent alone should decide. The remainder prefer one of the two middle-of-the-road positions where parent and child together decide.

The proportions of respondents who classed specified criteria as most important for selecting a husband, arranging the criteria in order from traditional to contemporary were: Lineage, etc., 23%; personal attributes, 40%; health and education, 27%; and love, 10%. The changing attitudes are suggested by the fact that love was ranked first by only 3% of the poorly educated rural population versus 23% of urban college level and 31% of the urban never married.

There has been a substantial rise in the ideal age of marriage over the past twelve or more years, but there also is evidence that the ideal age is at or near a ceiling.

Knowledge about legal age of marriage is

minimal; the implications of this for proposed legislation are discussed.

Three-fifths to four-fifths of all respondents married husbands of the same religious, residential, and economic backgrounds as themselves. Almost all of them married men of the same or higher educational level. These evidences of traditional influences in mate selection are contrasted with the low priority given some of those items in earlier questions on reasons for marriage and criterion for selecting husband.

Contrary to the expressed attitudes as to who should select the husband, we find that marriages of the study sample were stated to be arranged by parents alone in 62%; and in another 23%, the parents made the decision but asked the respondent's views. Such arrangements were most frequent among the rural, the less educated, and the older respondents and less common in the urban and more educated. The implications of these and related findings are discussed.

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