

What You Should Know about

Are they really the weaker sex? Why does their emotional interest vary so sharply? Are they more jealous than

BECAUSE most men can't figure women out they say women are unpredictable and let it go at that. And women accept the charge and make the most of it. But is there such a thing as a "typical" woman? Are women the "weaker" sex? Are they emotional rather than rational? Jealous? Competitive? More given to feelings of insecurity than men are? If they are any of those things, why?

And when it comes to sex, why does the same woman waver all the way from a complete lack of interest at times, no matter how charming her husband may be, to vigorous responsiveness at other times? Are social factors stronger than her biological impulses in directing her sexual behavior?

If the interacting psychological, social and biological forces that affect their behavior were well enough understood, perhaps women would no longer be so unpredictable. Scientists who have studied men and women and their relationships have concluded that some patterns of thinking and behavior are fairly typical of women in general.

For example, men who work with women often accuse them of taking things personally and getting emotional over situations that ought to be viewed rationally and impersonally. And they're right, to this extent: If somebody makes a general statement that "people" think or do thus and so, a woman's instant reaction almost invariably is, "I don't," or "Yes, that's true. I do." (And the first thought of

most women who read this will be, "What do you mean—women take things personally? I don't take things too personally.")

Two psychologists, Winifred Johnson and Lewis Terman of Stanford University, spent many months carefully studying and evaluating all scientific findings by psychologists, sociologists and biologists on the subject of psychological sex differences. They report that their survey of more than 40 of the best research studies showed that, "Women are consistently more intimately and intensely personal than men. They are strongly interested in persons and spend more time and thought on people and personalities than men do . . . Excellent studies of young children show that girls very



JOHN BLACK
Dr. Judson T. Landis and Mrs. Landis talking with students in his University of California course on marriage problems. The coeds are, from left to right, Ginny Boyle, Nancy Hicking and Jane Wadlow. His professorship of family sociology was established last fall

Women —EVEN IF YOU'RE A WOMAN

en? More competitive? Rational?

By Dr. JUDSON T. LANDIS and MARY G. LANDIS

early are more interested in relationships with others, while boys are more interested in material things."

If this is true, then other facets of feminine behavior begin to be more easily understood. If personal relationships are of major importance to women, then their conversation will tend to deal with people more than with things. (And the girls will gossip when they get together.) Since their personal relationships get greater emphasis than other things in life, women will tend to be possessive toward the men in their lives. And they may be catty toward other women—evidence that they are not quite sure of their own standing with their associates, either men or women, and are trying to protect their own interests by undermining potential competitors.

This intensely personal attitude that women take toward life is responsible at least in part for the explosive in-law situations found in many American families. When a girl marries, she likes to believe she is taking over as the only woman in the man's life. But she is usually made aware quickly that the other woman, her husband's mother, was there first and has no intention of withdrawing her very personal interest in him. Sometimes there are sisters, too, who have looked upon brother Bill as a valuable personal possession.

Take, for example, the case of a couple we shall call Lynn and Tom, who had been married six months and were living in Tom's home town. A friend who found Lynn in tears one day got this explanation: "We were going to buy a new rug and Tom went by his mother's and talked it over with her yesterday! He seems to think her ideas are so good! Now that he's talked it over with her, he knows exactly what kind of a rug he wants, and I'm furious. I'll keep the floors bare before I'll have that rug."

Or, there's the typical story of Jane, who broke several dishes in the space of a few minutes one morning and explained candidly, "Well, they were my best dishes, but breaking them wasn't exactly an accident. I admit I did some slamming around. But I was so mad! Bill's mother sent over another baked dish for our lunch. About once a week she does that, and Bill goes for it as if he hadn't had a square meal for a week. I feel like telling her to cook for her own husband and let me cook for mine!"

These wives' reactions toward their mothers-in-law were fairly typical of some of the complaints that showed up among 544 married couples, in a study we conducted with the help of associates at Michigan State College. Couples who were in the early years of their marriage co-operated by supplying information anonymously about the different phases of married life that had required them to work at the task of adjusting to each other.

In making the study, one of our objectives was to learn—if possible—who really is at fault when families have in-law trouble. The findings pretty definitely exonerated the men. Of all the couples or individuals reporting in-law trouble, brothers-in-law were blamed in only 6 per cent of the cases and fathers-in-law in 11 per cent of the cases. But sisters-in-law were blamed in 13 per cent of all cases and mothers-in-law in 50 per cent.

In 20 per cent more of the cases, a combination of family members got the blame; so that, altogether, the women in the family were assigned the responsibility for the great majority of in-law quar-

As practicing sociologists since 1929, Dr. Judson T. Landis and his wife, Mary, qualify as nationally prominent experts on woman and her role in family life.

Dr. Landis, who holds graduate degrees from the University of Michigan and from Louisiana State University, is the University of California's first Associate Professor of Family Sociology—a position created at Berkeley last fall to offer students college preparation for marriage. He now has some 300 students divided into two marriage education classes: one for freshmen and sophomores, the other for juniors and seniors.

Mrs. Landis met her husband when they were undergraduates at Greenville (Illinois) College. After their marriage in 1930, she joined him for a time in public-school teaching, but now confines her collaboration to out-of-the-classroom writing and research. Building a Successful Marriage, the first of their five books, is a text that is being used in more than 200 colleges and universities.

The Landises are both forty-five years old, and the parents of teen-age children, Judson Richard and Janet Faith. Of this article and their continuing efforts to understand marriage and its problems better, they said: "Marriages are complicated because men and women try to force each other to fit unrealistic patterns. If women and men can learn to understand and accept themselves and each other as they are, rather than as they think they ought to be, they can live more happily together."

—The Editors

rels. And the women scribbled on the questionnaires such comments as, "His mother still thinks he belongs to her" . . . "His sister is as old as I am, but she still tries to get by with being his 'baby sister' " . . . And the like.

A man, standing at a safe distance, might say, "So what? Of course, a husband's mother and sister go on liking him. They don't suddenly turn against him just because he married. What's his wife complaining about?"

Well, the only answer to that is—women are women. They take things personally and get emotional over situations that might not even register with a man.

But there is more to why women are greatly concerned with personal relationships. There are factors basic in life and society that give women good reason to be possessive, jealous and competitive—sometimes even tricky.

For one thing, there are not enough marriageable men to go around. Our system of marriage assumes that there will be a suitable man for every woman, but statistics show that this is not the case. Actually, according to the estimate of the Census Bureau in 1949, in the United States there were 83 males in the 25- to 34-year-old age group for every 100 females in the age groups those men would normally marry. Or to put it another way, there were

a half million more young marriageable women than there were young marriageable men. As people get older, the proportion gets worse; after middle age, there are two marriageable women to every marriageable man.

Since numbers discriminate against women in the marriage market, men can get away with appropriating for themselves certain traits and characteristics, and assigning others to women. And the male assigns to himself aggressiveness and dominance, and assumes that women, the opposite sex, must have the reverse of these traits.

Women are faced with a choice of either being submissive and weak, or giving the appearance of being so; because men find it very upsetting to discover in women the traits they have assigned to themselves. Women are thus forced to subterfuges. It takes a lot of ingenuity for a girl to figure out how to chase and catch a boy successfully, while giving the impression of being chased; and once learned, this skill is bound to carry over into other situations in her life. Having learned to get what she wants by subtlety or by deviousness, she learns to attack her competitors indirectly, by innuendo and suggestion—sometimes called cattiness.

The question comes, then: Why do women bend themselves to adjust to such pressures in life? Is the privilege of being a wife worth it?

The answer is that in spite of today's acceptance of the equality of men and women, and of democracy in their relationships, some facts of nature cannot be changed. Women still give birth to the children, and need support and protection while they are doing it. For women, biologically and socially, the pressure is toward self-expression through motherhood. Even the most career-minded of women are inclined to suffer from some sense of inadequacy if they don't have at least one child. Further, every woman wants the feeling of security that goes with having exclusive possession of a devoted husband, whether or not she has children. Her economic status and the social level at which she will move depend in large part upon the husband she gets.

The need for security, emotional as well as economic, is very strong in women. It is a basic reason why women want to marry. We don't hear much today about the clinging-vine type of woman. She is supposed to be extinct. Nevertheless, there is some of the clinging vine in every woman, and necessarily so. Because she simply is not so muscular as the male, she tends to compensate by seeking masculine protection.

In addition to physical factors, there are social forces which continually pressure a woman. Women are intuitively and acutely aware of what is expected of them in the world; men are still supposed to be achievers. College girls expressed it well in a study conducted by Dr. Mirra Komarovsky, a sociologist at Barnard College, who has done significant research dealing with roles of women in modern life. One coed said, "When a girl asks me what marks I got last term, I answer, 'Not so good, only one A.' When a boy asks the same question, I say very brightly with a note of surprise, 'Imagine! I got an A!'" Another girl confessed, "I was always fearful lest I say too much in class and answer questions that the boys I dated couldn't answer."

Girls logically conclude that the most acceptable, and therefore the easiest, thing to do is to avoid upsetting nature and (Continued on page 68)



To Tim and Eve, watching at the window, there was a chilling ruthlessness in the sight and sound of the measured steps