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ALTERNATIVE LIFE-STYLES AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

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In recent years, social changes have brought about major differences in family life and expectations. There have been increased numbers of women in the work force, especially women with young children; an increased divorce rate has meant that women have frequently become heads of families; changes in custody practice have led to fathers more often being awarded custody of children; a general decline in birth rate has resulted in smaller families; there have been changes in sexual behavior; there has been an alteration of traditional role behaviors; and progressive urbanization has affected family ties.

The ability to control reproduction has had a major impact. Birth control methods have made it possible to limit birth rates with consequent diminution of the impact of pregnancy and childbirth on the lives of women.

An important related change has been in the area of work and careers of women. For some families this change has been enriching, for others it has generated conflicts about achievement, family responsibilities, and role redefinition. Social changes have spurred challenges to the traditional views of male and female development. They have also affected the conditions of

growing up and effected the sex role stereotyping of childrearing. Family life-styles and models have begun to include many alternatives to the "traditional" family.

Reference to the work alternative immediately brings up the question, alternative to what? It implies a norm, and thus an alternative to that norm. The obvious response to this question is that the norm is a two-parent family with two children, in which the parents are married to each other, the father is away at work during the day, and the mother is a "housewife."

When we face the reality of the American family, we discover to our surprise that only 6 percent of American families currently fit the model. Thus, these "traditional" families have become the deviant ones. Our pluralistic society offers a variety of alternative models, some relating to differences in cultural norms, others occurring because of socioeconomic conditions, and still others, the product of changing mores and values. In this chapter we will review the various alternatives as they currently exist and describe how these affect the rearing and mental health of children.

What Has Changed

One immediately apparent change is that the birth rate has dropped dramatically. Americans are having fewer children than in any time in our history. However, the number of unwed mothers has increased. Census data

show that there are fewer marriages and more divorces. In 1975, the census bureau reported a 3 percent drop in the number of marriages. Furthermore, the proportion of women remaining single until they are between the ages of twenty and twenty-four has increased by one-third since 1960, and the number of unmarried women and men living together has increased by 800 percent during the 1960s. The divorce rate in the United States is now at the highest point it has ever been, and it is higher than any other industrialized country. One million divorces occurred in 1976 compared to two million marriages. Two million adults and one million children under the age of eighteen were involved directly in divorce; (including indirectly a multitude of friends, relatives, neighbors and colleagues). At today's rate, one-third of first marriages and close to one-half of second marriages will end in divorce. One-half of all separations lead to reconciliation, but half of these reconciliations are temporary and end ultimately in divorce. A rough projection based on divorce rates is that 30 percent of children growing up in the 1970s will experience parental divorce. Thus, divorce has created many single-parent families.

Within what has been considered the traditional family structure, the situation has also changed. Both partners are more apt to be working even when young children are at home. Approximately one-half of all women sixteen years or older are in the work force or actively seeking employment. Forty-one percent of these working women have children under eighteen

years of age; 31 percent of children under six have working mothers. The number of women in the work force has increased by 60 percent in the past decade.

While this represents substantial change, it is important to note that the "traditional" pattern itself, with a full-time, life-time mother has actually been traditional for only one or two generations, the result of increased industrialization and relative affluence. Previous to this, women who were in the lower classes had always filled many roles and shared the burden of work in order to sustain their families.

Another change has been in the definition and relationship of family members to each other. The time spent living together in a family unit has come to be only a small part of the life cycle. Recent census data also reveal a rapid expansion of the numbers of people living alone. Almost 20 percent of American households now contain only one person. Most of the people in this age group are either young and not yet married, formerly married people, or older people who have been widowed. While women predominate in one-person households, a considerable number of divorced men now live alone. Furthermore, a young adult without a spouse is more likely to be living alone than with a family.

The past few years have also seen many changes in attitudes about

career and family life-styles, especially among young people. In a 1967 study, 50 percent of women college students stated that in addition to being a wife and mother, having a career was important. By 1971, 81 percent of a sample of college students held this view. At the same time, contrary to prevailing misconception, 91 percent of male students expressed interest in marriage to a wife with a career out of the home. Furthermore, 60 percent of male and female students thought that fathers and mothers should spend equal time with children, 44 percent of males felt that men and women should share household responsibility, and 70 percent of females and 40 percent of males felt that both partners should contribute equally to family financing. This latter discrepancy may represent either a realistic evaluation of the present differences in male/female earning power or a reluctance to relinquish the privileges accompanying the role of the major "breadwinner." By 1977, three-fourths of college men said that they expected to spend as much time as their wives in bringing up children.

Potential parents are now more concerned about the high cost, both personally and financially, of having children. People report wanting fewer children, and those who have raised a family often express regrets about their choice.

The law has provided other indicators of change. The 1973 Supreme Court decision permitting legal abortion, the emergence of no-fault divorce,

increased recognition of illegitimate children, and joint custody following divorce are among the changes which affect life-style.

Lest we see these as radical departures from tradition, we must remember that many of the so-called radical ideas of this part of the century recapitulate much of the earlier ferment around women's rights, male and female sex roles, sexuality, and the relationships between the individual family and society. The last half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 1920s brought a sharp increase in these concerns. The depression of the early thirties, followed by World War II in the forties, interrupted the development of alternatives, and brought forth the era of togetherness, the 1950s. The baby boom and the increased domesticity of women were the aftermaths of this disruption. In a sense then, we are witnessing an evolutionary process.

Since the turn of the century, scholars have debated the impact on the family of these changes. Some see the family as undermined by its loss of economic functions, the movement of populations, the shift of manufacturing from home to industry, and the emergence of public schools and day nurseries. For the first time in history, both men and women can find work and satisfy basic needs without family ties. Thus, while the family no longer may function as a work place, school, or hospital, this does not imply that the basic family functions of nurturance, raising children, and providing

companionship and refuge are not important.

Another important change has been the reduction of infant and child mortality and the development of contraceptives. When the life cycle was shorter and the youngest child usually left home close to the end of the average mother's life expectancy, there was less concern about planning for later life. Today the average women can expect several decades without maternal responsibilities.

Rossi estimated that the average woman marries at age twenty-two, has two children two years apart, and dies at seventy-four, nine years after the husband's death at age sixty-seven. She thus has fifty-six years of adulthood (starting at age eighteen): (1) 23 percent (thirteen years) are without a husband; (2) 41 percent (twenty-three years) are with a husband but without children under eighteen; and (3) 36 percent (twenty years) are with a husband and at least one child under eighteen.

If we assume that full-time parenting is required only up to school entry, then only 12 percent of a woman's adulthood (or seven years) consists of full-time mothering of preschool children. While these figures continue to change, it is clear that even the nonworking woman in contemporary society will spend almost two times as many years with neither husband nor dependent children as she does in caring for preschool children. Furthermore, the rising

divorce rate makes it a distinct possibility that many women will be alone for even a longer time than in the past, and that they will have to support themselves, and often their children.

The Choice of Singleness

A new style of "singlehood" has emerged. It appears that those who remain single by choice are increasing in numbers. In 1962, a study of unmarried college students reported that only 2 percent of them had little or no interest in future marriage. A decade later, Stein found that 2.7 percent of freshman and 7.7 percent of seniors did not expect to marry. By 1973, however, 40 percent of senior women said they did not know whether they would or would not marry. Further, 39 percent of seniors felt that traditional marriage was becoming obsolete, and 25 percent agreed with the statement that the traditional family structure of mother, father, and children living under one roof was not a viable family organization. Bird believes that changes in sexual mores and sex roles have contributed to this development. Men no longer have to marry to have sex and women no longer marry to get financial support.

In the 1950s, Kuhn studied a group of individuals who had not married. Their reasons for remaining unmarried included: hostility toward marriage or toward members of the opposite sex; homosexuality; emotional involvement

with parents; poor health or physical characteristics; unattractiveness; unwillingness to assume responsibility; inability to find the “true love”; social inadequacy; marriage perceived as a threat to career goals; economic problems; and geographic, educational, or occupational isolation that limited the chances of meeting an eligible mate. The main thrust of these findings is that those who did not marry were seen as failing. Stein, in a more recent study, reported positive reasons for remaining single. Individuals spoke of freedom, enjoyment, opportunities to meet people and develop friendships, economic independence, more and better social experience, and opportunities for personal development. Adams, in 1971, suggested that for women to choose singleness they must have economic independence, social and psychological autonomy, and a clear intent to remain single by preference.

Since the dominant value in society is for marriage, individuals who choose to remain single often experience some stress. Some of this is because singleness is considered a threat to married people. Further, some report active discrimination against single people. For example, 80 percent of the companies reporting in Jacoby’s 1974 survey, asserted that while marriage was not essential to upward mobility, the majority of executives and members of junior management were married. Over 60 percent felt that single executives tend to make snap judgments, and 25 percent believed that singles were less stable than married people.

There appear to be differences between the life experiences of single men and single women. Single women more often than single men find themselves frustrated in obtaining intimate relationships. Sometimes, intense relationships, either heterosexual or homosexual, may help develop a sense of community or family. Friendships become an important source of support and sustenance. Many single women live together or with their parents or families for emotional or economic support, or to ease the loneliness and isolation that may occur when there is no one to count on. However, marriage clearly does not guarantee reliability and companionship either.

Research data indicate that unmarried women have better physical and psychological health than unmarried men. It is not clear why this is true, although people have speculated that men who do not marry may have more serious physical or emotional problems than women who do not marry.

There have been few studies that have examined the reasons for remaining single or the consequences of remaining single for a lifetime. There are, however, some women who make the choice because they do not wish to make unacceptable compromises. Since women have tended to marry up (that is, into a higher social status), and men down, there may be fewer men available for women at the top. Furthermore, physical attractiveness and agreeable personality characteristics have in the past tended to be seen as more important for attracting a partner for women than for men.

There has been even less information gathered on women who remain single because they choose lesbian relationships, since most research on homosexuals focuses on males. Lesbians tend to have long-term stable love relationships. Some lesbians also desire to be parents and may achieve parenthood either by adopting children or by bearing them with or without marriage. Some lesbians are bisexual, and formerly married; others have children by artificial insemination or by finding a man who agrees to be a "donor."

Abbott and Love reported that one-third of the members of the Daughters of Bilitis (a gay women's organization) had children. Those who were divorced often had serious problems about child custody. Some of the court decisions have allowed them to retain custody of their children, as long as their partner did not live in the household. There has been increasing interest in lesbian mothers and the effects of their sexual preference on their children. Although there is little long-term data available, it appears that the children of lesbians, including those who live in lesbian households, grow up with the same range of sexual interests and preferences as do other children.

Why Marry?

Marriage is one of the few institutions which exists in all societies. It has a number of important functions: (1) it allows for regulation and stabilization

of sexual relationships; (2) it is a solution to the problem of replacement in society and legitimizes children; and (3) it divides labor. The American perspective has been that marriage occurs for a number of reasons: (1) happiness; (2) political or economic alliance; (3) as a springboard for society; and (4) to have children. For the individual a number of other complex reasons are added, including: societal and family pressures; fantasies about a "perfect" life; concerns about loneliness; and needs for intimacy. Specific choices are often made because of romantic expectations and wishes rather than more practical considerations, such as the similarity of life goals or the ability to work out problems together.

People do consider a number of factors, including the compatibility of ideas, values, expectations, and desires, as well as family background, age, education, financial success, and future goals. Most often, however, romance starts a relationship. While it may persist and even expand, the realities of building a life with another person often present problems that were not initially expected. There may be concrete recognition of disparities, or dissatisfaction may arise from unconscious issues related to past experiences and conflicts. An aspect of the process of selection of a mate, after all, is based on unconscious signals. Marriage also presents a paradox, especially for people who marry early before they have settled their own concerns about identity and independence.

From the perspective of mental health, marriage appears to be a benefit for men, but a stress for women. Married women seek help for emotional problems more often than married men or single women. Marriage may be more stressful for women than men for a variety of reasons:

1. The woman who marries modifies her life more than does her husband and risks more loss of autonomy. Although this pattern is changing, and there are an increasing number of couples who work out alternative life-styles (for example, dual-careers, commuting, and so forth), these patterns are by no means problem-free, nor do they necessarily change some of the pressures.

2. For women who marry and become housewives, the tendency toward lack of role differentiation and diversity may lead to decreased self-esteem. The fact that the housewife role is an ascribed rather than achieved role, and that it is expected that women perform well in it without opportunity for diversification, implies that all women must succeed. In fact, women who do not succeed in this role are frequently viewed as life failures.

3. A loss of status may occur for a woman who has had an active career and then gives it up to marry. She often finds her role as housewife and mother devalued, although lip service is paid to its importance. While fewer women without children give up work than do mothers, many women who marry alter their career or work patterns and take positions with more flexibility and fewer time demands in order to spend

more time at home or to be available to travel or entertain.

Recent work in adult development has indicated that important shifts occur throughout life.' The concept of a marital life cycle has also evolved. Stages in the individual life cycle may or may not be paralleled with stages in marriage, and conflicts may result from the fact that the partners are in different stages of development in their lives or because there are shifts in tasks, expectations, and demands which include the birth of children, changes in careers, relationships with relatives and friends and the physical environment. Alternative styles must often be worked out in the course of a marriage since complementary shifts may not occur in both partners. If alternatives are not possible, the balance of the relationship may be disturbed.

Children versus Childlessness

More and more couples today are choosing not to have children. Many decide to postpone childbearing temporarily or indefinitely because of career goals, dislike of children, anticipated problems, or desire for more freedom. Some of these people seek sterilization, others rely on birth control. This is a major social change; it is the first time in human history that the *choice* of childlessness has been safe and possible. The impact of this change is not yet clear, although it appears that the stigma against childlessness has diminished.

Vivers has reported that about 5 percent of all couples voluntarily forgo parenthood. There appear to be two paths. One is an explicitly stated intention, the other is postponement until it becomes too late. Since there is strong cultural pressure to have children, it may be easier to avoid the issue rather than to make a deliberate decision.

Many people who make the initial decision to remain childless, later change their minds. This is indicated by the fact that an increasing number of "older" women (past thirty-five) bearing their first child state that they had decided not to have children earlier in their lives, and by the increasing number of people who have requested reversals of sterilization procedures.

Little long-term data are available about those who have chosen to remain childless. Couples who are childless however do report greater marital satisfaction during the early years of marriage than do those with young children. A national survey reported that 88 percent of childless wives and 73 percent of childless husbands between ages eighteen and twenty-nine felt happy with their lives, compared with 65 percent of husbands and wives with children under six. Contentment dropped and stress increased when couples had their first child. As the children grew older, marital happiness increased, and this pattern continued after the children left home. Over the course of their adult lives, however, women with children have reported greater overall life satisfaction than childless women.

This situation is not entirely due to the conditions of parenthood itself, but also relates to other pressures including economic strain, relationships with family, the need to adjust to differences in backgrounds and personalities, and the expectations of often immature and inexperienced people that they can live together and agree on a number of previously unknown aspects of life.

The decision to bear children is a complex one. Motivations include a love for children and the feeling that they will offer a full life, that it is "natural" to have children, that children will create a closeness and family atmosphere, that children will please a partner (or parents), and that having children will provide a kind of immortality. People also want children because they are insecure, dependent, or seek love and approval. Having children may also be viewed as a way of finding normality, approval, or reaffirmation of sexuality.

While there is evidence that women who marry but remain childless are more successful in their careers, the higher a woman's educational level, the less likely she is to stop her career when she has children. The stresses of motherhood are high because of beliefs and attitudes about child rearing which place higher demands on mothers than on fathers. Although pregnancy and childbearing do involve women more, mothers also continue to remain the major rearers of children, despite work and careers.

The Impact of the Changing Role of Women

Responses to the changing role of women have varied. There are those who herald a new era of freedom while others cite mothers and wives who are out of the home as the cause of divorce, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, violence, homosexuality, and other "ills" of society. This view reflects both anxiety about change and the inability to assess realistically its impact. In many instances, the assumption that all women have a choice does not take account of the pressures on women to work and the lack of real alternatives.

The working mother has become an increasingly more familiar maternal model, and marital status no longer determines whether a mother works. Although, currently, most working mothers are married, live with their husbands, and have school-age children, a large number (more than 15 million) are single, separated, widowed, or divorced. A substantial proportion of this group have young children. In the past decade, families headed by women have grown in number ten times as rapidly as two-parent families.

Women who are single parents either because of divorce or because they never married suffer significant economic problems. Such women are increasingly likely to be poor. In 1974, one-eighth of all families in the United States were headed by women, and one-third of these had incomes below the poverty level. This figure, which is on the rise, includes women who were formerly considered middle class.

Most women work out of economic necessity; they remain in low-status jobs that provide limited personal goals. Moreover, they add their job responsibilities to their traditional roster of activities and often think of their work as an extension of their nurturant maternal and providing role, rather than as an independent activity about which they may have some choice and from which they obtain personal gratification. These women often experience role strain as a result of the proliferation of areas of responsibilities.

Women who work bear a considerably greater psychological burden than do men in reconciling family and work demands. This burden has been increased by current reemphasis on the importance of early childhood relationships which are still usually thought of as mother-child, rather than parent-child.

Concern and conflict about the care of their children is a prominent feature in working women's lives. If children develop physical or emotional problems, women are usually quick to be blamed and also to blame themselves, although the etiology factors may not be at all clear. The working woman often believes that her work is not in the best interest of her family. She may, in fact, overcompensate by asking for less help from other family members than the nonworking woman.

In assessing the effect of maternal employment, data on maternal

separation and maternal deprivation have been confounded with those on employment. Thus, it is often difficult to delineate factors. In addition to the work and child-care situations, one must consider the nature of the early mother-child relationship, the personality characteristics of the mother prior to the birth of the child, her concept of her role, the age of the child and his/her emotional and cognitive state, and a variety of family variables. Furthermore, these factors, in turn, affect the mother's relationship to the child and her decisions about work. Additional evidence suggests there may be sex differences in the responses of children to maternal employment; for example, a boy's development has been reported to be enhanced by a stimulating environment outside the home, whereas a girl may benefit more from close contact with the mother. These findings are also related to the age of the child when the mother is less available and to the role of the father. The interpretation of these data must also address the values involved in these reports. Namely, what is considered a desirable personal outcome for boys as compared with girls?

The impact of sociocultural factors, especially poverty, in the lives of families is, in addition to psychological factors, an important concern. Bronfenbrenner points out that deprivation and poverty interfere with parent-child relationships, as do social forces undermining the confidence and the motivation of people to be good parents. Poverty as well as limitations in real options, outlook, and assessment of opportunities, can contribute to a

limited view of life and to depression. Furthermore, deprivation and abandonment are not only the result of the physical absence of a parent, but also derive from preoccupation, depression, and emotional unavailability. If the mother is already depressed, full-time employment can further sap her energy.

Bronfenbrenner, Lamb, and Brown also call attention to the effects on children of the absences of fathers, whether by virtue of working long hours or because of divorce. Absence of adults increases a child's susceptibility to group and peer influences, which may, in some cases, intensify antisocial tendencies.

An additional way in which adults fail to play a meaningful part in children's lives derives from discontinuity between generations and from the instability of many families resulting from physical scattering of family members. Intergenerational bonds are often lacking or diffused, and parents and grandparents do not have opportunities for contact.

Maternal Deprivation and Attachment

There has been a great deal of concern about how to integrate emerging data on the importance of mother-infant attachment, with the fact that a growing number of women are leaving their children, including young infants, in the care of others. The impact of this on children's development is not clear.

In their follow-up study on the effects of close contact between the mother and newborn infant, Klaus and Kennell found that there were positive effects from the intimate contact, such as greater attachment behavior, weight gain, and fewer illnesses in the first year. Also, there was greater language development at five years of age.

While this and other data emphasize the importance of early bonding, the equation of maternal employment with risk of failure of attachment cannot be made for a number of reasons. Many authors' emphasize the necessity of considering multiple variables in context, since to consider the effect of maternal employment alone is simplistic and limited in applicability. Cox, for example, found that the effect of maternal employment was negative in father-absent families but not in families with two parents. Resch, Johnson and Johnson, Murray, Hoffman, and Moss have reported that the distress of children in substitute care arrangements was eliminated, or modified, when there was familiarity with the substitute care setting, consistency and caring in relationships with caretakers and other children, and emerging play interests. Marantz and Mansfield suggest that the cognitive stage of the child and other developmental variables are also important.

In a review of studies of the effect on infants of substitute care, Murray concluded that developmental progress of the infant appears to be related to the strength of the mother-infant attachment and the level of stimulation in

the home, regardless of the setting of rearing. Separations do not in themselves appear to be harmful, particularly after the first year, as long as they are accompanied by predictable substitute care. Emotional disturbances are reported when mothers put such young children in unstable care. Moore found that children placed in day care before the age of one year showed more dependent attachment to parents and more fear than those who went into day care later. In comparing all children receiving substitute care with exclusively home-reared infants, he found that home-reared infants were less aggressive, more obedient, more docile, and more concerned with approval.

Much of the literature decrying early mother-child separation is based on the assumption that infants are monotrophic, that is, form attachments with one primary care taking person. This idea has been widely accepted, despite contradictory evidence. There is considerable evidence to support the view that multiple attachments can form and that the strength of attachments depends upon the amount and quality of attention received from caretakers. In his review of the literature in this area, Rutter emphasizes that the quality of mothering is the more critical variable.

Moreover, Schaeffer and Emerson report that children may also select their fathers for attachment. They challenge the assumption that the child's preference is inevitably for the mother because of her nurturant relationship with the child. Other researchers agree that multiple caretakers per se are not

harmful, provided there is stability and predictability in the child's environment.

Thus, while there is evidence that the caretaker does indeed have to be available and consistent in the early period, there is no clear evidence to support the conclusion that there are negative effects of sharing the care-taking among consistent responsive individuals. Certainly this is the pattern in many cultures in which a grandmother, older sibling, or other relative or friend regularly performs part of the caretaking.

This raises still another basic issue, that is, how one decides on what constitutes a "good" or "bad" outcome in a child. At this time the connections between early patterns and later developmental outcomes are unclear. Furthermore, there are important cultural variations. Since children are reared to become adaptive adults, there are no absolute answers as to what must be provided in every instance. Many models may be applicable as long as basic needs for stable care and contact are met.

Furthermore, the importance of looking at the development of attachment as a mutual interaction is often overlooked. Studies of constitutional traits have recognized that, in the initial month of a child's life, the child's development involves a mutual interaction with the caretaker. An understanding of the reciprocity of the relationship between the infant and

caretaker raises doubt about the conventional concept of the mother as the one person responsible for shaping development of a plastic, unformed individual.

Sex Roles— Biology and Communication

While much of the literature considers the specific impact of particular behaviors, such as presence or absence of a mother or the socioeconomic condition of the family, there has been less attention paid to the significance of communications about expectations, particularly with regard to sex roles. The choices and adaptations of children reared in home environments with differing values and expectations are affected by these communications.

Parents do treat little boys and girls differently. They do this in many subtle ways, consciously and unconsciously expressing their views of sex role differences, for example, the perception by parents of an active little girl as "masculine" and a quiet, reflective little boy as "feminine" occurs frequently and is clearly perceived as approval or criticism by a child.

The evidence that parents have different expectations and, in fact, behave differently toward male and female infants is convincing. Rubin, Provenzano, and Luria found that there were consistent differences in the reports of mothers about the characteristics of their one-day-old infants that were not objectively confirmed. Female infants were seen as significantly

softer, finer featured, smaller, and more inattentive than male infants. Furthermore, they reported that from the birth of the child mothers acted upon these perceptions. Studies of older infants continue to reveal mother-child interactional differences. Moss found that mothers tended to soothe girls when they cried by picking them up, smiling, and vocalizing, while boys were more often held, rocked, and aroused.

In another study, when the same six-month-old infant was presented to mothers who were not told the sex of the infant, a differential response was reported depending on which sex they thought the baby was. When the mothers thought that the infant was a girl, "she" was handed a doll more frequently; when they thought it was a boy, a train was given. In addition, the mothers did not recognize that their behaviors differed. They also thought the female was "softer" and so forth, even though the same infant was presented to all mothers.

While there is evidence that biological differences in the development and functioning of the nervous and endocrine system exist between girls and boys, the relevance of these have been difficult to establish. The powerful influence of culture and the enormity of individual variation are so critical and begin to have an impact so early that it becomes difficult to draw conclusions about which factors are innate or fixed, and which derive from postnatal influences. Maccoby and Jacklin, in an exhaustive review of research data and

cross cultural observations, point to evidence that a large number of widely held views are not supported by data.

Block emphasizes the importance of differences between mothers and fathers in their interaction with male and female children of different ages. She also notes the relative paucity of data on fathers' interactions with their children. Block's data indicate that both mothers and fathers appear to emphasize achievement and competition more for their sons than for their daughters, and that there is a greater emphasis on control of affect, independence, and assumption of personal responsibility by the parents of males. Block states that age-specific socialization practices exist and are related to the developmental level of the child and to the tolerance of society for impulse expression in particular areas.

Restrictive stereotypes limit the functioning of both men and women and determine many aspects of their behavior. The prohibition against affective expression by men inhibits the development of sensitivities in them, just as the overemotional, dependent model inhibits the expression of activity and independence by women. Block feels that because children are socialized early into culturally-defined sex-appropriate roles, introspection and self-evaluation, which are essential for psychological growth, are discouraged. She states that socialization appears to expand the options of the male, who is encouraged to be competent and actively instrumental in tasks, but that its

effects on the female are more negative since individuation and self-expressive traits may be discouraged, leading to repression of activity-oriented impulses and renunciation of achievement and autonomy.

The potential developmental significance of early communications leads us to consider the implications for psychological development when communications are confused, dissonant, or changing.

Impact of Maternal Employment

We can now redirect ourselves to another aspect of the implications of alternative lifestyles, the effect of maternal work as a communication with children. A growing body of data supports the idea that there are benefits for mothers, children, and families when the mother works, even if it is out of necessity rather than desire. Hoffman finds that in her relationship with her children, she, as a working mother, feels less hostility and more empathy toward her children, expresses more positive affect, and employs less coercive discipline, although she may be somewhat overindulgent. Birnbaum studied the attitudes of professional women toward their children and compared them with nonworking mothers. She found that the professional mother experienced greater pleasure in her children's growing independence, was less inclined to be overprotective, and placed less emphasis on self-sacrifice.

There is considerable additional evidence that a working mother has a positive effect, particularly on her daughters. The daughters of working mothers were found to be more likely to choose their mothers as models and as the people they most admired. Adolescent daughters of working mothers, particularly in middle- and upper-socioeconomic groups, were active and autonomous and admired their mothers, but were not unusually tied to them. Some authors, in fact, have speculated that greater maternal distance may result in greater later achievement by daughters. For girls of all ages, having a working mother contributed to their concept of the female role as less restricted. They usually approved of maternal employment and planned to seek employment when they grew up and became mothers. Unlike daughters of nonworking mothers, they did not assume that women were less competent than men. Vogel and associates and Douvan found that the daughters of working mothers have less traditional sex role attitudes than the daughters of nonworking mothers. Interestingly, these findings were obtained in a period when working mothers were less often found than at present.

Studies of daughters' academic and career achievements, provide additional evidence of the positive effects of a mother with career interests. A number of investigators have found that women who achieve or who aspire to careers, particularly to less conventionally feminine careers, are more likely to be the daughters of educated and employed women. Data on the husbands of working women indicate that they are more actively involved in the care of

the children and that the active involvement of fathers has a positive effect on both male and female children. Furthermore, the husbands of professional women are more likely to respect competence and achievement in women.

Models of Marital Interaction: Dual Workers and Dual Careers

The Rapoports, in 1971, suggested that the continuing increase in dual-career families would require more child care, revisions in sex-role attitudes, and reconsiderations of the organization of productive work and of family life. In their subsequent volume, they pointed out that while the dual-career pattern was being chosen by more people, many of the necessary changes in life-styles and patterns had not occurred because of the inflexibility of social systems and internalized resistance to change.

If both partners in a dual-career marriage have high commitment careers with responsibilities extending beyond the usual eight-hour work day, the commitment demands modification in roles, tasks, and decision making. For example, a husband cannot assume that his wife will take off from work when a child is ill or when household repairs are needed, and a wife cannot count on her husband to be available to repair the car when it breaks down. Couples must work out a variety of strategies to cope with both the ordinary aspects of life and the special circumstances that are created by the lack of availability of one partner who functions as the "wife"—the partner who

tackles the chores, arranges child care, schedules social activities, and buffers the other (the husband) from the demands of daily life.

Weingarten describes a typical scene which points to some of the adaptational issues faced by the dual-career couple.

Mr. Jones is in his study finishing a speech he will be delivering in New York the next day, while making calls to the usual network of babysitters to arrange for someone to stay with his children for the evening. Dr. Jones is talking with her answering service on the other line to ascertain how high a fever Billy Smith has, while simultaneously heating up a stew for dinner. In an hour, Mr. Jones will drive to the airport, the babysitter will arrive, and Dr. Jones will meet Billy Smith and his parents at a local hospital emergency room.

Meanwhile, at Billy Smith's home, Mr. Smith is calling his wife at her law office to ask her to stop off on her way home and buy a pizza so that they will not have to prepare dinner in case Dr. Jones wants to see Billy that evening.

Clearly, dual-career marriages compel both partners to make adaptations that may not be required within more conventional marriages, and these have important implications for children. Modifications in many areas of life can be seen in terms of decision making and allocation of responsibilities for family maintenance and care of children. Couples must

often redefine gender-oriented activities and adapt emotionally to the stresses of new roles and expectations. Obviously, when both spouses are heavily invested in their careers, giving up one's aspirations for the benefit of the other is likely to be viewed as a loss.

According to Rosen, Jerdee, and Prestwich, it is rare for couples to acknowledge that they have chosen to give the wife's career precedence, because of the conflict with traditionally accepted values. Berger and associates report that even when this was done, the family often maintained the myth that the traditional model still existed. The husband who was a house-husband denied that he was unemployed, even to friends.

Lein and associates found that for spouses who viewed work as a financial necessity rather than a personal commitment, it was easier to be supportive of each other's job-seeking endeavors. Under these circumstances the wife's work was seen as a way of expressing interest in the family, rather than competition with the husband's work. Among dual-career couples, the wife's work was more likely to be thought of as competing with the husband's work.

The dual-career model is relatively recent, and except for a few reports, there are few data on its long-term viability. For example, the widely held myth that marital discord or dissatisfaction may arise from conditions of

status inequality in the marriage has not been supported. Richardson was not able to substantiate the presumption of marital troubles arising in dual-career families in which wives were equal to or higher in occupational prestige than their husbands.

With regard to children, there are even fewer clear data, except that derived from the evidence of achievement of the children, noted previously. On the other hand, there is positive developmental value connected with communicating to children that any number of instrumental, cognitive, and emotional functions are not necessarily gender-oriented or rigidly associated with sex role. It seems reasonable to hope that children who grow up in a home where caretaking activities are shared between the father and mother will be able to develop flexible ideas of their personal work role and family role identities. Furthermore, children can develop the idea that both parents can be readily and realistically available for all kinds of problem resolution.

Divorce

An alternative, the single parent or reconstituted family, may result when divorce has occurred. The fact that most divorced people remarry, although men are more likely to do so than women, indicates that there are likely to be significant changes in family structure. This includes the problems and adjustments of reconstituted families and the increased number of single

parents as a result of divorce.

People considering divorce often do not expect to be vulnerable to the stress which occurs particularly in the period of time shortly after the divorce. They may be unprepared for the loneliness, the isolation, and the emptiness they often feel. While separation may initially be a relief if a marriage has been filled with tension and conflict, at some point those who divorce usually do experience profound feelings about the loss.

The stress of marital disruption may lead to emotional or physical symptoms. It has been reported that generally, widowed, separated, and divorced persons have higher rates of disability than married or never-married persons. Separated and divorced individuals, particularly women, seem unusually vulnerable to acute ill health. The most vulnerable period appears to occur during the separation phase.

People who are separated or divorced have also been found to be overrepresented among psychiatric patients. Of all the social variables related to the distribution of psychotherapy in the population, none has been more consistently found to be so crucial than marital status.

In both sexes, the automobile-accident fatality has been reported to be higher among the divorced than among any other marital status group. It has been found that the accident rate doubled during the period from six months

before to six months after a divorce. It also appears that when there has been a loss of a loved person within the previous year (by death, divorce, or separation), the potential for self-destruction is greater. The suicide rate is higher among the divorced than among people of any other marital status. There is increasing evidence linking human loneliness, or a sense of separateness, to disease and to premature death. “Although marital status is not clearly indicative of the presence or absence of loneliness, a few comparative statistics in the premature death rates of white males reveal strikingly higher death rates among the unmarried.” Besides statistics from the suicide and automobile fatalities, data demonstrate increased mortality rates from cirrhosis of the liver, pulmonary carcinoma, gastrointestinal carcinomas, cerebrovascular accidents, and cardiac disease among the divorced and widowed population.

People in the throes of marital crisis may experience lowered self-esteem and may be more vulnerable to symptoms, and this may have a substantial impact of their children, acutely as well as chronically. Statistically the relationship between marital disruption and psychopathology appears to be greater for men than for women. Separated men complain of a sense of rootlessness, a loss of purpose, and a lack of meaning in their lives. They seem to experience, more than women, a sense of personal failure at the ending of a marriage.

Perlin and Johnson found that symptoms of depression were particularly common among the formerly married, especially those with children, those with inadequate financial resources, and those who were socially isolated. The rate of depression among the divorced increased with the number of children at home and was greater when the children were younger.

The demands as well as the anger and anxiety of children may be draining and difficult. Parents having marital difficulties often feel guilty about the distress they see in their children, and they may be overly sensitive to criticism or disappointment. Even the "normal" problems of growing up can be seen as related to the marital failure. Self-blame and anger at the partner frequently increase the burden for children.

When children are involved, divorce ends the marriage but not the relationship with the children, or usually, with the ex-spouse, thus adding to the parent's experience of stress. Fathers in particular suffer from being displaced. Losing a spouse may be viewed as a blessing, but the absence of children can be extremely upsetting for the noncustodial parent. Men rejected by their wives may fear equal rejection by their children and may then alter their behavior in order to protect themselves from this potential loss. The children, in turn, may lose their father and find themselves with a "buddy" who tries desperately to please them. They may experience their father in a

new way—as dependent upon them.

Some parents seek remarriage to provide a home, or to make up for an absent parent, only to find that new problems emerge. Children may reject the new partner because they had hoped for the reunion of their parents, they may see the new spouse as a competitor, or they may not like the new "parent." It is important to recognize that this new "parent" is, in fact, a stepparent and not a replacement. A relationship must develop over time. It is a new relationship with unclear definition for all members of the family. Because a marriage has taken place and the parent and new partner view themselves as a couple, does not mean the children see the situation the same way.

When there are children, divorce should be seen as representing a change in the structure and function of a family, rather than as a dissolution of the family itself, since the children continue to have their original family as well as family that is added. When bitterness is contained, and the best possible decisions are made, adaptation can be easier.

Divorce and Children

It has been estimated that of all children born in the decade of the 1970s, 30 percent will experience parental divorce. As the number of children involved in marital disruption increases, it is necessary to understand the

effects of this experience on them. Currently, 60 percent of all divorces involve children under the age of eighteen. In 1976, over one million children were involved in divorce proceedings.

Rutter's work serves to put in perspective the impact of marital disruption. He found that there is an incidence of behavior problems with 5 percent of the children with a good relationship with one or both parents in a stable marriage, 25 percent of the children with a poor relationship with one or both parents in a stable marriage, 40 percent of the children with a good relationship with one or both parents in a conflict-ridden marriage, and 90 percent of the children with a poor relationship with parents in a poor marital relationship. Thus, it appears that parental conflict produces symptoms in children and that children appear to function better in an atmosphere of contentment, whether in a two-parent home or in a single-parent situation.

Wallerstein and Kelly focused on the child's developmental level when they reported on the impact of divorce on children. They divide children into four groups: (1) preschool ages three to six; (2) early latency ages seven to eight; (3) late latency ages eight to eleven; and (4) adolescence.

They found that preschool children tended to focus explanations on themselves, for example, "Daddy left because I was a bad girl." Self-blame for illogical reasons were seen frequently and were not easily treated. Most of

these young children had difficulty expressing their feelings. They also lacked a firm sense of continuing family relationships after the divorce, since their conception of a family was based on those individuals who lived together in the same household. These findings suggest that long-term disruption is more probable in younger children. It has also been noted that a single parent is most vulnerable to depression when his/her children are under the age of five.

By the age of seven, children were more aware of their feelings and better able to admit to sadness, although not so able to acknowledge anger. They tended to blame themselves less, but experienced strong feelings of abandonment and rejection. These were coupled with fear of their mother's anger. By age nine, children rarely felt at fault, but experienced a profound sense of rejection and abandonment by the departing parent. They acknowledged their feelings of anger toward one or both parents, but they attempted to conceal their pain and wanted to appear to be courageous to the outside world. Intra-psychically, they experienced intense loneliness and they were torn by the conflict between anger and loyalty. They felt betrayed by their parents. They were also troubled by the sense that their relationship with one parent was jeopardized because of that parent's withdrawal of emotional investment.

Adolescents seemed painfully aware of their feelings and were

frequently able to express the anger, sadness, loss, betrayal, and shame. Generally, they seemed to recognize their parents as individuals and they achieved some insight. They demonstrated an understanding of their parents' incompatibility, however, they were extremely concerned about their own future marriage and the possibility of sustaining relationships. It appeared that those teenagers who were able to detach themselves from their parents' emotional turmoil soon after disruption of the marriage achieved a better long-term adjustment.

Frequently the pain of children is denied by one or both parents, who are struggling with their own emotional responses. Children fear that they will lose the love of their remaining parent if they continue to love the absent one. For youngsters, divorce implies loss, often in the context of unresolved ambivalence about the intense need for the absent parent and the wish to have the conflict between parents ended. While the parents may continue to be available, the noncustodial parent may not be involved as actively. The children's fantasies of reconciliation last for years, even after one parent has remarried. Fox found that mothers of preschool children were more likely than mothers of older children to report their children's jealousy of mother's boyfriends. Mothers of older children were more likely to report that their children encouraged "father shopping."

It is a major psychological accomplishment for a child to complete the

task of mourning the loss of the pre-divorce family and to accept a new family constellation, which includes a new relationship with both the custodial and the visiting parent. The child's daily routine will probably change and he or she will have to adapt to the stress of a new economic and social situation, including the possibility of a new home, new friends, a new school, and living with a parent who will undoubtedly be preoccupied, overburdened, anxious, and maybe depressed.

A variety of symptoms may appear in children, depending on the child's developmental level and previous adaptive capacity. Symptoms include insomnia, nightmares, inability to concentrate, decline in school-work, emotional outbursts and regressive behavior, enuresis, thumb sucking, compulsive masturbation, and behavior that is overtly sexual or aggressive. Children may also report a number of functional complaints, including muscle weakness, fatigue, change in appetite, abdominal pain, headaches, and general anxiety symptoms. Psychosomatic disorders, such as asthma and ulcerative colitis, have also been reported, and pre-existing symptoms may be exacerbated.

Preventive approaches can increase the capacity for adjusting to new situations, by fostering a sense of security and love. Lacking these approaches, children are in danger of losing their developmental stride or of internalizing a sense of low self-esteem.

The Single Parent

In 1976, 85 percent of all white children in this country lived with both parents. The remaining 15 percent, or approximately 7 million children, lived in a single-parent family, largely as result of divorce. Eleven and nine-tenths percent of all children lived with mothers only; 1.2 percent with fathers only; the remainder lived with neither.

When a single parent is the mother, the economic burden becomes awesome. Divorce thrusts most families into a lower socioeconomic situation, especially since a large number of fathers do not provide financial support for the children after divorce, and fathers often also lose active contact with the children. Thus, the earning potential of female heads of families is crucial. The number of divorced mothers in the labor force is higher than that of any other group of mothers. Most of these women are concentrated in low-paying jobs. In 1976, 52 percent of children in female-headed families were in families living below the poverty line.

When there is a divorce, adaptation is required of all family members. Tasks are often reassigned and the children are expected to assume more household and personal care responsibilities. Single-parent families often suffer from a sense of social isolation and from a more erratic life-style. For many children, this includes being shuffled from weekday homes to weekend homes and visiting in artificial settings.

The single mother or father may turn to a child to assume some aspect of the role of the missing spouse, an experience which can be distressing to the child. A father who wins custody of his children may unconsciously set up a new household in which his oldest daughter replaces his wife and becomes the caretaker of the family. She may have to struggle with her own wishes and fears about replacing her mother. Not infrequently a situation such as this leads to adolescent acting out behavior that results in pregnancy. Similarly, the visiting parent may establish an inappropriate relationship with his or her children. For example, the visiting father may treat his teenage daughter more as a date than as his child and he may be surprised when she states that she will only visit him if she brings a friend with her.

Children in post-divorce single-parent families have been reported to seek treatment at a rate of one per 100 population, or more than double the rate for children in two-parent families. Furthermore, the impact on children in single-parent families appeared greatest among the youngest children. Children aged six to seventeen in female-headed families had a treatment-seeking rate more than double that of children of the same age in two-parent families, but children under six years had a rate that was four times as large as that of children under six in two-parent families. While children under six from all family types combined had a lower help-seeking rate than older children, children under six living with separated single-parent mothers had a higher rate than children six to thirteen living with their mothers. This

reversal of a positive association of age and utilization rate is cause for concern.

Reconstituted Families

The current high divorce rate is coupled with a high remarriage rate. Four out of five divorced individuals remarry, with younger individuals more likely to remarry than older ones, and men more likely to remarry than women. Current statistics show that only about half of these marriages succeed.

By 1975,15 million children in this country under the age of eighteen were living in stepfamilies, and there were approximately 25 million husbands and wives who were stepparents. There has been to date no clear definition of the role of the stepparent. The only social and legal model has been the natural parent role.

In most cases the stepparent is a newcomer who is not welcomed into the existing system and is experienced by the children as an intruder. Stepfamilies are likened by Visher and Visher to open systems with greater instability and lack of control than nuclear families. They list the popular myths about stepparents: (1) stepfamilies are the same as nuclear families; (2) the death of a spouse makes step-parenting easier; (3) stepchildren are less burdensome when not living at home; (4) love of a partner guarantees

love of the partner's children; and (5) every new stepparent will immediately love his or her stepchildren.

Most stepmothers feel pressure to achieve closeness with stepchildren and to avoid being cast in the role of "wicked stepmother." Women tend to experience more guilt than men if they do not succeed in this task. A new stepfamily is plunged into a sea of unresolved feelings toward ex-spouses and lost parents. Anger and competition are evoked. Children often attempt to fragment the adults' relationships in order to reunite the original family.

The first three to four years of a new family unit are the most turbulent as the husband and wife struggle to create a new relationship. There is little privacy, and much need to devote time and energy to children. Often the children attempt to exclude the stepparent from family intimacy.

Remarried women often fear that their own children from the previous marriage will suffer, or that they must favor a stepchild. Stepparents often find it difficult to know how to behave. Remarried men often feel guilty and concerned that their children are being neglected, especially if they have left them, or if there is a new baby by the new wife. Stress may be greater during visits by the children on holidays. Self-doubt, insecurity, and inferiority feelings are frequent reactions to the confusing demands and pressures. Lowered self-esteem, feelings of helplessness, and depression may be the

psychological risks of stepparents.

Two-Location Families

From an anthropologic point of view, families do not necessarily form households. The U.S. Census Bureau, however, assumes that married people live together and that those who are unmarried live alone. While there are few data to indicate how many people do live separately, certainly war, immigration, and economic necessity, as well as some jobs (such as salesman) that require frequent travel, have kept families apart. Today, however, a new pattern is emerging: the female-determined two-location marriage. Kirschner and Walum reported a variety of modes of coping with living apart, including the use of the telephone and letters. They found that couples did not waste time together in meaningless activities, but used their time effectively. Often work activity was compressed during the couple's separation to allow for more free time when they were together.

Couples use their separation to maximize their individual career opportunities. Farris reported a high level of education and income in these couples. She also found that dissatisfaction with the arrangement increases with the duration of separation, thus the couple who commute on a weekly basis have less difficulty than those who commute on a monthly basis.

Those couples who did not have children did not tend to view either

home as the primary one. If there were children, the primary one was considered the one in which the children lived. The woman-determined two-location family leaves the male either as a new or renewed single in an established network, or in a new location as a married single. In either case, friendship or support systems may be difficult to establish or maintain because of lack of understanding and discomfort experienced by others. The female member finds herself in a similar situation. The extended family may deprecate her, coupled friends may avoid her, and new male friends may try to seduce her. The male culture, furthermore, is not supportive or sympathetic to the male who "lets" his wife go off on her own, and this is especially so if she has left him with the children.

Commuting families with children continue to be rare, and there is little data available on the impact of this life pattern on children.

Other Alternative Styles

Communes and communal living arrangements, which have become common since the 1960s, have long been a tradition in American society. More than 200 were founded in the nineteenth century alone. Those communes that have survived the longest have been groups with a strong unifying drive or theme, often religious, and with a strong, usually patriarchal leader. Communes tend to consist of a group of people, married or single, who

decide to live together and share certain aspects of their lives. This may include money, a home, activities, child rearing, or other tasks, as well as life goals. Many communes have evolved into self-contained communities and have been in existence for ten or more years, whereas others are temporary and continue only as long as the members remain in similar positions in life.

Most often, people who live in communes, if they are married, do maintain monogamous life-styles within the structure of the community. This is to be distinguished from group marriage situations which are essentially polygamous and where sexual exchange occurs and women may have children fathered by anyone in the group. Over time, these group marriages have tended to be unsatisfactory to the participants because of the difficulty most people have in sharing all aspects of their lives.

Another alternative, the open marriage, is also defined in different ways, depending upon the participants. Although the couple is formally married open marriage for some implies total freedom of life-style including the possibility of multiple sexual partners; for others, freedom is limited to friendships and activities, but other sexual partners are not expected to be part of the arrangement.

The O'Neills proposed an open marriage based on equal freedom and identity. The premise is that both partners change in a marriage and that each

must accept responsibility for himself or herself and grant the same to the partner. They also believe that children need not be required as proof of love. In contrast to the mystique of togetherness, the guidelines in this marriage are equality, which indicates respect for the equal status of the other; role flexibility; open companionship; identity; the development of the individual through the realization of potential and growth toward autonomy; privacy; open, honest communication; living for the present; and trust. This marital pattern is still marriage conceptualized within the framework of a primary relationship between two people.

Another model is the multilateral marriage where at least three individuals live together and have a commitment that is essentially analogous to marriage. Those groups studied revealed that the members were motivated by personal growth opportunities and by interest in having a variety of sexual partners. In these families, sex roles were much less differentiated than in the average nuclear family.

Because they are relatively recent in origin, there have been few careful evaluations of the successes or problems of these alternative life-styles. While there are distinct advantages to sharing goals, values, and property, in many of the alternative living situations jealousy, competitiveness, and communication problems exist and may ultimately disrupt the group or couple when other partners or demands force choices or preferences. It is

clear that changes and experiments will continue, and that there are many reasons why men and women seek other sources of support, companionship, and intimacy. In this situation, as well as in traditional marriages, the fairy tale concept of living happily ever after is not necessarily realized. Further, we have few data on the impact of these environments upon children, particularly over time.

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