

That Parents May Work and Love and Children May Thrive

by MARY POTTER ROWE

It has been clear to us as we look at the rise and breakdown of nuclear families that many parents of young children have no help available to them. We not only have to make help available to families but must also teach generations of people who have been taught that help isn't there, that help could be there.

— Mary Potter Rowe

PAID employment is seen by many to interfere with loving and with children's lives. Somehow we have created a society where paid employment often hinders or cripples the emotional life of parents and children, creating an environment where many children are not thriving and where others grow into only a fraction of their potential. Perhaps this was always true in part. The struggle for survival has ever taken our minds from caring and creativity and from finding all or even most parts of our loving selves. However the struggle for *literal* survival has changed — most people believe that our population should be able to survive well on our present resources and technology. And, far more significant, *the struggle for survival has never before been antithetical to children*. Children used to be seen as the quintessence of survival, both psychically and literally. Our children perpetuated ourselves and cared for our old age. Until recent times no one could seriously have contemplated an adverse relationship between constructive work and the thriving of children.

Once, on farms, men and women were both working — more or less without a salary — side by side in a joint enterprise for survival. They nurtured and took direct personal care of each other. Their status was pretty equal in many families, a matter critical to their being able to love themselves and each other. Neither husband nor wife had many grown-ups to talk to, but both had some. The woman had four or five pregnancies and nursed each baby for ten to fifteen months. She was more or less tied to her home, by biology, for at least five or ten years — but both

parents raised and trained the children. Both parents worked more or less from dawn to dark.

Then men left the home workplace. They earned money, they gained a differential status within the family; some gained great power. They delegated the education of their children. They found more and more colleagues. The women took on more responsibility for home and children. Little by little, in modern factories and offices, the paid employment of men became completely separate from home, excepting only business entertaining. Work relationships became nurturant in only one direction. Men got used to being personally taken care of without any longer directly taking care of others. They delegated new caretaking duties to a new female professional: office wife. Women got used to being supported. For the first time in history we had some adult females whose chief occupation was limited to child-raising and whose companions were basically limited to children.

The right to salaries, to status, to power remained predominantly with men. Little by little, work, meaning paid work, became a male right. Caring and nurturance and loving became female rights. Objective processes, rational, scientific thought became man's pride. Subjective, intuitional processes became women's province. Unpaid work was left predominantly to women. And our society came so to value money that a full-time homemaker with five children and all her husband's business entertaining will say she "doesn't work."

But now things are changing again. I have of course in any case outlined only a stereotype — but that stereotype is falling apart. Many social changes have occurred simultaneously. There were the textile industries, and World Wars I and II, which drew women into paid work. The pill came along to make short the time when for women biology is destiny. The birthrate has dropped to fewer than two children per family; many men and women are not marrying and not having children. Day care has become much more readily available. And finally, in the 1960's a tremendous need for workers, in occupations now sex-typed for women, created a strong demand for women in the paid labor force. Paid workweeks have changed dramatically for most workers; the paid labor force has radically changed. The labor force participation rate — defined as the proportion of men of working age who are actually in the labor force — for men over sixteen has dropped from 95 percent in 1900 to 87 percent after World War II to 78 percent in 1973. The labor force participation rate for women has risen steadily — from 20 percent in 1900, to 25 percent in the 1930's, to 45 percent today. Nine out of every ten young women in their teens — of our daughters and granddaughters — may be expected to be in paid employment.

The paid workweek for most men has dropped sharply since 1900; for women it has risen very sharply. Two out of every five persons in the labor

force are women; women bring in nearly one-third of family incomes and are the chief wage earners for one family in eight. The only major exception to this pattern is that all top professionals, men and women, have been working longer hours.

Why have these figures changed so remarkably? Have women been "taking jobs from men," as was asked after World War II? There is no reason to believe this is generally the case. Men, in general, are longer in school, retire earlier, take longer vacations, work shorter hours. The demand for women, predominantly in jobs sex-stereotyped for women, has risen by leaps and bounds since World War II.

How are men and women feeling about their lives at work? We know that worker dissatisfaction is severe. General Electric workers raise major questions about the quality of life at work. Assembly-line companies all over the world are studying the conflict between producing goods and providing work that is rewarding for its own sake. Many major employers are concerned about overqualified workers.

We read in *Work in America*, the report of an HEW commission, that work should not damage nor degrade; should interest and satisfy; should use many skills and provide a chance to learn new skills; should enhance other life rôles, so that paid work enhances parenthood, and should provide goods and services.¹ We know that satisfaction at work is linked to the prestige of the job, to control over one's work, to the cohesiveness and kind of work-group relations, to the challenge and variety of the tasks and to the extent to which family life is strengthened. Yet industrialization has produced millions of jobs which, unlike the farm work of 1800, do not meet these criteria. And suddenly we hear many serious questions. Questions, this time, not from revolutionaries but from the responsible, caring, hardworking men and women among us.

Suddenly, women have asked: Why are we paid 60 percent of men's wages? Why is the wage gap still widening across most educational classifications? Why is our paid and unpaid workweek on the average ten hours a week longer than men's, in families where there are children? Why are we basically restricted to ten or twelve "women's" occupations out of the hundreds that exist? Why should so many of us be isolated in suburban homes?

By the same token, of course, men have some questions. Why should we fight the rat race? Why should we go to southeast Asia? What did I spend my life for anyway, if my children don't know me or care for my values? Why should we die five or ten years sooner than our wives? What shall we do, as breadwinners, when our jobs disappear with recession?

Most serious of all, both men and women are asking, "Why should we have children? Who wants children, only to leave them all day in order to work outside the home?" Many men were somehow taught that it is not "masculine" to care regularly for little children; many women have some-

how concluded that having children will interfere with their personal development. With present social structures and work structures, both points of view may well be right — temporarily — but they are deeply destructive to men and women and children.

I believe people are beginning to work for change. Women are tired of being asked why they want a career. Men, many of them, would *like* to be asked why they want a career. Men are tired of being asked why they want to relax by cooking or why they want to play with children. Women, many of them, would *like* to be asked. Both men and women want satisfying employment *and* family life.

What Do We Know about the Work of Parents and the Thriving of Children?

Very little, except that many children are not thriving and many parents likewise are not thriving happily. Research concerning the whys and wherefores of this dual problem is greatly needed but is handicapped by a number of scientific, political and methodological difficulties. Several strategies for research and evaluative studies of parental employment and its effects are given at the end of this chapter.

As much as one would like nicely detailed charts to steer one's course by, people have often had to deal with problems of compelling importance, without having enough facts. We wish our readers to bear this in mind as we now set forth our impressions about the effects of parental employment on adults and children.

Economic Effects. I have already summarized the major economic effects on families of mothers working in paid employment — employed mothers are major breadwinners for millions of America's children. Many more millions are primarily supported by fathers. In financial terms a customary benefit/cost analysis for families would of course reckon all kinds of indirect effects and social costs and social benefits. Each family presumably tries to reckon costs and benefits, and the aggregated economic effects we can identify are, of course, of interest to us all.

In our present society, where parents often must choose between (more) paid employment and (more) time spent with children, many parents are demonstrably "valuing" (more) paid work over having (more) children. By definition, each time a parent chooses, or is forced to choose, paid employment instead of direct child care, he or she is announcing by that action a relative evaluation of time that could be spent with children.* It seems plain that for many families, having any children

* It may be argued that paid employment *does* "take care of" children. Nevertheless the statement still holds that a parent spending time earning money is announcing a social and personal evaluation of what "care" means and that evaluation is ever swinging more toward financial support than toward direct care.

has acquired a net negative (financial and psychic) value. (This net negative value may of course arise from idealistic motives: for example, population control.) In my opinion, other people's children also have extraordinarily little value to our nation's most important political and economic leaders.

The direct financial benefits to the national economy of paid maternal employment have been huge. Mothers in the paid labor force are, as workers, disproportionately responsible for the tremendous economic expansion since World War II for two main reasons. First, they supplied a greatly disproportionate number of new workers. Second, paid maternal employment has the effect of monetizing child care and housework. If a homemaking mother becomes a computer programmer, her wages add to the GNP (effect one) and her former child care and housework duties are likely to some extent to pass to a *paid* worker (effect two). Thus in recurrent, as well as once-only, terms, paid maternal employment has been deemed critical to recent economic growth.

The Thriving of Adults. There are a fair number of studies which show few or no significant differences between the marriages of employed women and those of full-time housewives. "Increased sociability," "increased confiding in husbands," "more sharing of decision-making on little things," "varied changes in power relationships," "more thoughts of divorce and more conflicts," "an increase" and "no increase" in sharing homemaking by children and husbands are all reported. Several reports indicate that wives who are in paid or unpaid employment at their own and their families' wishes are happier.

The crucial point is that despite all these conflicting reports on secondary issues, most women in paid employment want to work; thus most wives report working "for financial reasons" but would want to continue even if money were not an object. Paid work is often considered an asset to self-esteem and happiness for women as well as to men. On the other hand, one researcher has written thoughtfully on threats to self-esteem for some women who *have* to work outside the home and who can find only demeaning work. Moreover, overwork has become a major problem among the numerous mothers who have no help from husbands or servants in caring for the house and who may wind up working over a hundred hours a week out of the 168 allotted to each of us — moonlighting of the heaviest sort. Finally, there is a correlation, not necessarily causal in nature, between enjoyment of maternal paid employment and enjoyment of parenting. As noted above, maternal paid employment may avert the hazards of isolated, neurotic mother-child relationships, thus perhaps improving the lives of mothers as well as children.

Studies of paid and unpaid employment and the thriving of men are

badly needed; anecdotal evidence is plentiful but conflicting. Nonetheless, it is apparent, as with women, that many men are not thriving in their work lives.

The Thriving of Children. There are few studies reporting effects of "normal" paid paternal or maternal employment on children in relatively typical family situations. Most studies available refer to special groups of children of mothers in paid employment. Many of these fail to control for such things as the effects of poverty, health of family members and child care arrangements, and many are in other ways methodologically rather weak.

However, the varied needs of children at different ages and of their parents have been carefully detailed. Although there are few if any studies that measure effects on neonates of maternal-absence-at-work, in general it appears that mothers and newborns fare better *together* either at home or at-work-away-from-home, unless there is one consistent, loving alternative caretaker. Infants and young children need "attachment" figures who are attentive, responsive and joyous. Some mothers with paid jobs find much joy and spend as much or more one-to-one time with their children as do full-time homemakers. Other mothers in and out of paid employment are less successful in the parental role. Fortunately, several studies indicate that babies do not have to depend solely upon their mothers for fulfillment of their emotional needs but can thrive with multiple attachments formed in their homes or in child care centers. This is important, since mothers of infants three months to three years of age are entering paid employment in increasing numbers and multiple attachments are becoming the rule rather than the exception.

The point is that neither maternal nor paternal employment *by itself* is the key issue in how well children thrive. Some abused and deprived children, for example, have employed parents and some have unemployed parents. The abuse and deprivation occur for a number of reasons, but there is not generally a correlation between such pathologies and parental employment *per se*. What *does* matter is the quality of care children receive from their parents or from other caretakers. And though specific long-term effects of various types of child care in and out of the home are not yet known, there is growing scholarly consensus that such group socialization experiences as nursery school may be good for pre-school-age children.

Scattered differences have been observed between older children of mothers with and without paid jobs. Most of these are either neutral or favorable to the health of children whose mothers have paid jobs. Interestingly, school-age and adolescent children of mothers in paid employment are apt to be superior in intellectual achievement and social

adjustment even if they are relatively unsupervised after school, and perhaps especially if they carry considerable responsibility. Daughters of employed mothers are likelier to take paid jobs themselves.

In summary, I feel that such evidence on paid parental employment as exists emphasizes the importance of parents being able to do what they and their families feel happy about. Plenty of consistent, responsive care is essential for children. Presently available evidence indicates that parental employment can be compatible with the provision of such care. We do not believe that parents now in paid jobs should leave them unless they want to; neither do we hold that full-time homemakers should enter paid employment unless they want to.

An Androgynous Vision for the Future

To what vision can we turn, as we consider the 1970's? We want to improve the quality of life at work, at home and away from home; we want children to thrive, and we know families are most important to children. These points lead me to suggest an alternative vision to stereotypical work and family life — that is, the vision of androgyny. What is androgyny? How could we get there? What might be the difficulties and the benefits?

Androgynous folk are spiritually (obviously not physically) both "masculine" and "feminine" to the degree they choose to be. In the present instance we are using the term *androgyny* to mean personal choice in the area of work, to mean that what people do, in areas now sex-stereotyped, shall be determined by personal choice rather than by sex-typing. It means permitting men to cry, to join the nurturant professions, to care for children and colleagues. It means permitting women to be assertive and financially independent and giving them wide career options.

The stereotypes that prevent us from an androgynous life start early. Consider a recent study of parents watching their firstborns in a hospital nursery. The interviewer says, "What do you think of your baby?" The replies are either, "Look, how vigorous, how angry, how athletic, how active!" or "Look, how dainty, how cuddly, how cute!" And we can all guess which sex gets which comments — even though the new parent obviously doesn't have any objective knowledge of what his or her child is like.

To permit our men and women to consider androgyny as a way of life, we must break stereotypes — in children's books, in movies, on TV, in the office, in our newspapers, in our language. The use of the generic "man" or "he" truly biases our thinking. This bias is illustrated by a recent study in which students were asked to select pictures they would use to illustrate a textbook. Half were given a chapter entitled "Industrial Man" and half one entitled "Industrial Life." In the former the generic term "man"

was used to mean "person"; in the latter it was not. In a significant proportion of responses, the so-called generic "man" was not generically interpreted. Many more students brought in pictures of men to illustrate "Industrial Man" than "Industrial Life."

The androgynous life requires new options for work — for instance, shared jobs in home and out of home. At a nearby college, the first couple to share an academic appointment was really eyed askance. No one was sure it would work. A year or two later — now — there are many shared appointments. Husband and wife work about three-quarter time each in one and a half jobs and share homemaking and child care. One important feature of this particular situation is that home and work be nearby — a facet of work that needs to be reinstated.

Suppose we restructured work options between husbands and wives. Of course, many families would want to continue just as they are. At present, many husbands enjoy their paid employment; many wives enjoy homemaking. In millions of other families the only parent or both parents already work both inside and outside the home. One-third of our mothers with preschool children are already in paid employment. And at least a fifth of all the child caretakers for these children are the fathers; some men are of course deeply engaged in the lives of children. But suppose we assumed that both men and women were completely free to share financial responsibility, child custody, child care, homemaking? I believe that we would see many more househusbands — not necessarily on a lifelong basis, but happily for a year here and a summer there. I believe there would be many more three-quarter-time workers, especially among young parents, if three-quarter employment were fostered and encouraged for both men and women.

How would an androgynous work life affect the lives of children? I believe that most women and men would like to have children and that they are really concerned about the welfare of our children. I also believe that many parents would prefer to share much of the child care themselves — if they could find a way to do it. Androgyny means that young parents, fathers and mothers alike, should be able to spend thirty or forty hours a week in paid employment and still have seventy to eighty hours to devote to their children and other home-family matters.

Let us take for example a family with young children who are in school and/or child care programs about half-time. If, while the children were young, both husband and wife worked thirty hours a week in paid employment and, as a matter of course, thirty additional hours at home in unpaid employment, we would introduce several improvements in work structure and in children's lives. Family finance would be more secure. There would be more jobs to go around in times of unemployment. Both men and women would have more variety in their work lives. Both would have at least one area of work — at home — with considerable autonomy.

Both would have two areas in which to acquire skills and self-esteem and a feeling of identity and purpose. Husband and wife would share directly a common purpose as on the old-time farm; children would grow up seeing both parents and would probably help more in home activities. Promotions would come more easily for women but not necessarily less easily for men; in most jobs promotion would just come a little later. Lifetime earnings for women would be much higher; for most men they would not be much lower, since lifetime earnings depend more on years in the labor force than on the length of the workweek for any given five- or ten-year period.

Both parents would have greater options to change jobs or get more training. People in tedious assembly-line work would spend less time there. Some jobs which demand sixty to eighty hours a week could productively be shared, either with a spouse or with a like-minded colleague.

The coming of androgyny will, however, take time. To begin with, there are both structural problems and emotional problems built into a stronger move toward androgyny. Some people ask, what of biological differences? Are not men better adapted to paid employment and women to homemaking? I think this was, and in some ways still is, a fair question. Lots of people persist in the belief that the sexes *are* temperamentally as well as biologically different. For instance, there are many who would protect the right of mothers to nurse, though not necessarily to the exclusion of part-time careers. But my own responses to the question of biological differences are three.

First, I believe the structure of work has changed. For example, a university president is not expected to be able to hunt buffalo; but today he or she is required to take care of everyone — the quintessentially traditionally feminine role. Likewise, mothers are no longer expected to nurse their babies unless they want to; on the contrary, most babies are bottle-fed, a task which can easily and happily be done by fathers.

Second, our impression of sex-role differences derive mainly from reports of observations which exclude the middle ground — the overlap where the roles played by the two are essentially similar. Most studies of sex differences depend on item analyses which bypass the 80 or 90 percent overlap between the sexes, in order to emphasize the 10 or 20 percent male-female differences. Androgyny does not require fifty-fifty distribution of men and women in every job category. It suggests, rather, that the 80 or 90 percent of women and men who share similar skills and interests would occupy similar job slots and climb similar job ladders.

Third, in the absence of a society which treats boys and girls the same, the Law of Parsimony suggests caution in our judgments of sex differences. It is simplest, for the present, to assume that most reported sex differences in work behavior are *socially* (rather than biologically) determined, and to behave accordingly in our policy planning.

The most difficult issues are emotional and in all of us. One recalls Pogo's famous First Law: "I have searched and searched for the person who is in my way, and I have found her, and she is me." I believe we are very resistant to changes in sex roles despite rational evidence supporting further movement toward androgyny. Why should this be? We do not know very much about the reasons, but I will try to raise some hypotheses.

Some reasons lie in the feelings men have toward themselves; some in their feelings about women. Some lie in the feelings women have toward themselves, some in their feelings about men. Strangely and sadly, most of the hypotheses I will raise to you rest on a philosophy of competition and dissonance between maleness and femaleness as mutually exclusive conditions.

For some reason, we believe men should suppress their nurturant selves; women their rational, instrumental selves. And this being so, there must be competition and striving between the sexes. As I continue, I would ask you to consider why and to what extent we would want to see nurturance and instrumentality as *dissonant* rather than *complementary*. I agree that some kinds of competition are necessary; but how much and what kinds are necessary?

I believe that our understanding of maleness and femaleness and of the relations between the sexes is among the most primitive, potentially painful areas we can consider. Power, status, money, security are at stake as we reorganize toward androgyny. All of us are at times deeply ambivalent, thoughtful, cautious, concerned as we contemplate androgyny. Yet I believe we can learn to understand ourselves better and reduce our anxiety.

With respect to women's feelings, we know now, from many research studies, that we build inner conflict into women about success. My own generation was taught that success in paid employment meant difficulty in one's personal life. Indeed, women have been taught this so profoundly that a whole generation of modern feminists has taken the issues to be far more "all or nothing" than they need to be. If I write what I am about to write, it is with great respect and gratitude to many "all or nothing" feminists. Many of these women found it easier to work for women's equality by assuming for a while that they had to give up men, marriage and children if they were to gain equality. In making this assumption, however, they live out the old, wrong precept we were taught — that homemaking and nurturance required abandonment of a successful career.

And yet it is not easy to give up the mistaken precepts and to work confidently for both career and family, on the same basis as one's husband. While I believe the future will show that many feminists accepted an old, wrong polarization of issues, I would not criticize any individual

for the choices she felt she had to make. Androgyny is possible, but getting there isn't easy.

Consider, for example, how most of us feel if a wife earns more than her husband. Yet these feelings are a last inheritance of an outdated polarization of interests between men and women. In the androgynous marriage, income is a family matter; paid and unpaid work equally earn the salaries of both; paid and unpaid work are equally the choice of husband and wife — a matter to be worked out and reworked out, over time.

How does a woman learn to choose androgyny rather than polarization and militancy? How can we relearn a commonality of family interests, rather than the dichotomy of interests represented by Matina Horner's "fear of success" and the phrase "the Battle of the Sexes"? For most women, having a true career choice depends on supportive males. Fathers have enormous influence on the careers of their daughters. Male peers at school, husbands and mentors are crucial to the career options of women about them. Without male approval and encouragement, most women in our society are forced into the "all or nothing" choice or make unsuccessful attempts at career and family, or decide to marry but not have children.

Men's feelings about their own inner polarization have received less study. Only this year will we see extensive publication of autobiographies and studies on men. If many women have been made uneasy about success in paid employment, many men have been made acutely uneasy about nurturant professions, including parenthood — and we are just beginning to learn about men's issues of this sort.

We are beginning to learn from research by men like Robert Fein and Joseph Pleck that men have an enormous interest in nurturance and in cooperative behavior. Talking things out, expression of feelings, caring for children and being cared for by children, cooperative rather than competitive situations are being shown to help men to thrive. Moreover, expressing these parts of themselves does not seem necessarily to lower labor productivity. Why have we trained men as well as women to dislike and suppress parts of themselves? How can children thrive in such a setting?

Our Perceptions of Men and Women at Work Together

Possibly some understanding may come from further exploration of our feelings about adult men and women working together. It is remarkable the extent to which we perceive such situations as competitive and threatening — or at least, unpleasant.

For instance, I was recently at a faculty meeting of a nearby university.

A distinguished professor spoke, a man I admire and respect and a person with a remarkable reputation for his work on equal opportunity for all. This man gave a fine short speech on affirmative action — courageously working on the subject, as men need to do, with his own white male colleagues. At the very end, however, he said: “In conclusion, I want to leave this thought with you. The financial and personal costs of affirmative action are high — it costs money, it generates paperwork and a lot of trouble. But we must all *force* ourselves to do what is right, in bringing in women.” Why should we make such difficulty out of equal opportunities for men and women at work?

Many hypotheses can be raised about why the situation of adult men and women working together is perceived as trouble. Several researchers have suggested that modern males are raised almost exclusively by women. The idea of having to accept female collegueship and women managers revives the image of childhood impotence. Because we have permitted generations of children to be brought up by women, these children equate adulthood with escape from female influence. In this typically skewed nurturance situation, a boy learns to be a man in negative image. That is, without an available male role model, a boy can only learn that a man is a “not-mother.” Thus, not only must he escape mother, to grow up — he must also suppress his nurturant, motherlike parts in order to gain male identity. The boy’s only other recourse is to identify with his mother, a process which can be healthy but which brings discomfort to many people. The more the father and his work are apart from the family, the more difficult for the son to become a whole human. Where a father’s work is better integrated with his family, and especially where children work *with* both parents, the children have a chance to learn cooperation and work-productivity in a male-female world.

But there are other psychic problems. Many people believe competition is very close to the aggression of sexuality and that having women colleagues will produce competition and therefore promiscuity. My own research indeed leads me to believe that both men and women often handle competitive situations by sexualizing them. Thus a man who perceives an able woman as a competitor may seek to reestablish the customary dominance pattern by becoming attracted to her or seducing her. In the same way, a woman may find her perceptions of competition uncomfortable and begin to flirt.

I do not believe this pattern means that we need to avoid fellow workers of the opposite sex. For one thing, one can learn to cooperate rather than compete; at least the attractions then can be based on equality and friendship rather than hostility and insecurity! Besides, men and women work together anyway and sexualize their relationships anyway. And finally, there are other ways to relate. The model of parent-child

relations has always worked well for mentor and protégé. Among equals a brother-sister model also works well — if the men were brought up nurturant and the women self-reliant.

Some observers believe that the male desire for status and prestige has very primitive roots. Men *demonstrate* virility; potency is directly linked to a man's ability to change appearance, to "show off"; virility is visible. Women therefore may not have exactly the same need to acquire visible status in the world of paid work. If this hypothesis is true, then women would tend to be less interested in seeking positions for the sake of status. Men, on the other hand, would be very much concerned to keep status positions for themselves; it is disconcerting to have a woman demonstrate "virility" by acquiring visibility in business. If a woman becomes highly visible, she is inevitably assumed to be mimicking "male" sexual behavior and will often arouse very primitive feelings that "underneath she must be homosexual." It is difficult to know what to do about deep-seated status problems. Possibly just knowing one's feelings will help.

Another problem is that some men are very uncomfortable about women in paid employment because this thought raises the specter of having no one left at home to "take care of" them. I believe these men are still deeply dependent. Our society never gave them a chance when they were children to learn the healthy *interdependence* of working together and taking care of each other.

Other men are profoundly threatened when a woman is more innovative, or produces more, or is paid more than a male colleague. This is especially true when a wife is more creative in the labor force and/or produces more or is paid more than her husband, a situation which women avoid like the plague and which automatically limits the extent to which they will innovate or seek well-paying jobs. I suggest that here again there is a very primitive energy source for these feelings.

Women are seen as creating life itself and as able to nurture life directly from their own beings. For many men the ability to invent, to "produce" in the process of proving work-virility and to support a family are *their* unique gifts and possibilities in life. If women can reproduce *and* nurse *and* invent *and* produce *and* support a family, do they "need" men? Trained from childhood to repress emotions, a great many men find it difficult to believe and accept that they are of course really *needed*, interpersonally. If all the other demonstrations of "male achievement" can be performed by women, some men then feel they have lost their identities and have become obsolescent. There is however some research and considerable anecdotal evidence that these problems I cite are not characteristic of secure and interdependent men. Many men easily outgrow their early discomforts as success, marriage and children bring them an identity and security.

It is my conviction that women also need chances to grow on these matters. Many women need to outgrow *their* dependence and to take responsibility for themselves. Many have lacked the opportunity to find themselves and to evaluate themselves in the outside world. As unpaid housewives, they do not know what they are "worth" in our monetized world. As housewives consider entry into the paid labor force, they may feel their "opportunity cost" is zero, and they may undervalue themselves and their skills. The combination of isolation from the monetized economy and discomfort about success leads many women to low self-esteem and to resentment against men and, I believe, damages their capacity to raise self-confident, caring sons and daughters.

All these factors have produced polarization between the sexes and inside us — between our nurturant selves and our instrumental selves. They have produced a world where many people, especially men, can grow up without ever having personally taken care of a person or an animal or even a plant, and where our ablest workers and most of our children are not expected personally to take care of anyone. How can we nurture children when we no longer expect caring behavior from our ablest men and women? How can children learn to be caring parents without taking care of anyone? I do not believe these polarizations are right or necessary in the world to come, and I believe we will move toward each other and toward our other halves. We are beginning to delve into our cultural heritage to pick up the strands of androgyny that have always been there — as Carolyn Heilbrun has gently shown in her fine new book.² Our teenage children are teaching us as well, and many parents are listening.

Whatever the cause of our erstwhile fears of the other sex and of its attributes, I believe that both men and women are finding they have much to gain from androgyny. Men who are deeply involved with their children learn that gestation, by itself, is not all that important. You love those you take care of — and children learn to love and take care of men who are involved with them. Men learn that their options to sing, to be angry, to decorate, to garden, to play, to cry open up huge areas of self once blocked off. Their relations with women become much deeper, much less scary. And their women complain less, as they too see what financial responsibility and paid employment are like. Men, on the whole, gain options to love.

Women stand to gain equal pay for equal work, to gain enormously wider opportunities for work. They gain companions at home who know what measles, on top of diapers, on top of leaky plumbing, can mean. They gain sleep, that priceless, precious gift to young parents. They gain opportunities for independence and status and creativity. Women, on the whole, gain options for their work.

Wider opportunities to love and to work mean more variety, more

interest, more companionship, more joy in the twenty-four hours of the day. Freud once said something like, "A mature adult is one who can love and can work." Androgyny means wider choices of both love and work for both men and women.

If men and women *can* both work and love, what would this mean for children? It would mean more responsive parental time. It would probably lead back to reintegrations of children with parental work and, one hopes, also with the aged. We could raise a generation where children had male and female role models of humans again personally taking care of each other. Obviously this vision is only a stereotype — there would be many variations on the theme, among families and within families over time. But I believe that androgyny will sometime be found to speak to the problems of families with many as well as few children, to the unhappy image of the black Sapphire woman, to the unhappy image of Momism, to the condition also of single parents as they seek opposite-sex friends and stepparents for their children. I believe that a world of men reintegrated with themselves will look very different to us all; that children will have a chance to grow with a purpose — being needed, and caring for others. If I am right the differences will be so profound as finally to show up in our scientific studies of child-rearing environments — we will have the kind of data, as well as the personal experience, to believe that the children of androgynous parents have a better chance to thrive.

You may ask, "But is not all this a foolish idealism?" I would answer that an androgynist insists that grief may be lessened or transformed through human energy and will. He or she may even go so far as to believe in prosperity, cooperation and good. Androgyny does have a tragic vision: the picture of culture crushing personality; of power, too often assigned to one sex, running wild into war and corruption; of children cared for mostly by strangers or not at all; of widespread loneliness, purposelessness and massive human waste. Yet the androgynist assents, silently or out loud, to the possibility that some tragedies may become obsolete.

Appendix

In the opinion of this author one might choose the following strategy for research and for evaluating studies of paid parental employment:

(1) Decide in a given study whose interests should be considered and whose value system should be applied. For example, in most studies of paid maternal employment the researcher implicitly or explicitly applies his or her own value system, or expects to decide a parental employment policy on behalf of the agency sponsoring the research. I have never seen

a parent-employment study which considered the well-being of "family units" or even of all family members. As an example of the problems involved here, ideally one would like a group of experimenters randomly selected as characterized by their attitudes toward maternal paid employment (which should of course be made explicit). A few studies do indeed make these attitudes explicit: "The writer has long cherished the opinion that employment of mothers in occupations outside their homes is a potent factor in producing maladjustment among the children of those mothers."³ Another suggests that since the authors of many studies of maternal employment seem to him to be working mothers themselves, the outlook expressed is perhaps only that of women. Many reports and studies of parental employment are written with remarkable bias. Considering what we know about selective perception and Pygmalion, not to mention Hawthorne, effects, a wider selection of investigators seems important to this author.

(2) Decide on a long-term or short-term analysis for reckoning costs and results of different parental work styles. For instance, if a mother never leaves the paid labor force, her lifetime earnings and those of her daughters are likely to be much higher than if she ever leaves the labor force for more than a month or two. If the analysis is to be long-term, we would want longitudinal rather than cross-sectional analyses, since otherwise we may be examining different populations. I do not know of longitudinal studies investigating effects on families of how parents spend their time, except for those which have looked at earnings. During World War II, especially, with all the concern over Lanham Act child care, one might have expected longitudinal studies to begin, but James Hymes, the noted World War II child care expert, informs me that he knows of none.

(3) Decide on a benefits *and* damages analysis. Many studies of the effects of maternal paid employment treat only benefits or damages but not both; studies of paternal employment usually deal only with benefits.

(4) Decide on a search for serendipity, or unexpected consequences, as well as expected ones. For instance, if maternal paid employment "results" in a certain percentage of divorces, but the children grow up free of certain pathologies, it may be considered important to record both facts, not just one. Most studies record results only in "expected" areas.

(5) Decide on "coinages" for analysis. For instance, studies of maternal paid employment may show critically important additions to family income (in dollars), many children left alone, an improvement in numbers of affirmative action plans reaching their goals, thousands of fathers freed for higher education, half the mothers delighted with their different kinds of work and half miserable. How are we to reckon, rank or weight these factors? Few studies have examined results presented in

different units, and the validity of nearly all parental employment studies can be brought into question for serious measurement problems and failure to relate units of analysis to goals.

Consider, for example, the studies which show that spouses regularly report their marriages "satisfactory" or "happy" until the day of separation. Is this kind of satisfaction a useful measure of the effects of maternal employment on marriage? I have elsewhere discussed at length our present inability reliably and validly to measure the effects on children (of any but grossly abusive conditions) in objective ways, beyond obvious yardsticks like pounds gained, inches grown and, possibly, I.Q. In particular, we are at a loss to measure affective (emotional) outcomes of any but grossly abusive situations. In such circumstances, careful measurements of inputs and detailed specification of aesthetic and moral-political judgments of outputs are needed, but are all too rare.

(6) Decide on a procedure for analyzing effects due to interactions and indirect processes. For instance, suppose paid work for both husband and wife means husband and wife get along better and "therefore" treat their kids better? So far as I know, no study of parental employment has examined interactions or indirect results on an empirical basis.

(7) Decide on a method of analysis that illustrates ranges of results. For instance, several studies show that, on the average, children of mothers in paid employment are more happy or about as happy and/or well adjusted as children of full-time homemakers. Could both these populations be composed half of children who are miserable, half who are ecstatic, and they average out to medium happy? We usually don't know, from studies presently available, but ranges of results are required in order to create ranges of recommended policies to meet the needs of different kinds of people.

(8) Decide on detailed operational terms of the study, in unambiguous language. For instance, are the parents employed part-time? How many hours? Full-year? Sporadically or regularly? What are the ages, conditions of health, occupational expectations of the populations chosen? What are the circumstances of the family? Father present? Father substitutes? Other household members? Does the paid employment occur at home? Are the children with the parent at work? What is family income? Who decided that each parent would work? Does each spouse like it? What status have her job and his job? Once clarified, these factors normally should be used to control results in the analysis. Since it is probable that the fact that results of studies on the effects of parental employment are generally uninformative is primarily due to the fact that parental employment *per se* accounts for only a tiny part of the variance in observed child behavior, it is of first importance that researchers describe their populations and "treatments" minutely and plainly. In my judgment, this has never adequately been done.

(9) Decide on a procedure to test the reliability of data gathering and the stability of results in different "treatment" conditions. Such procedures are rarely reported in studies of paternal employment.

(10) Decide on appropriate sample sizes, bearing in mind the probably small effect *per se* of parental employment on psychological and social well-being. Randomness is of course critical, if one is to generalize from samples to larger populations; unfortunately all studies of maternal paid employment appear to be drawn from rather specialized sub-populations of the United States population, and cannot properly be generalized to "all mothers," much less "all parents." The studies I know of paternal paid employment are also few and all specialized.

(11) Study possible alternatives ("opportunity costs") for the parents in question. For instance, what would happen to fathers and mothers now in paid employment if they stayed home with their kids? Many authors, for instance, are querying the effects on children of their staying home full-time with one isolated adult who may or may not (consistently) respond to them in a wholehearted and helpful fashion. Several theoreticians believe male children must define masculinity as "not-female" because they have no male caretakers. Several authors are now suggesting benefits from increased fathering. And there are many other questions to ask. What advantages might accrue to infants with some hours at home and some at a stimulating center? And what about the financial implications — the monetary opportunity costs so dear to the economist? Maybe staying home "isn't worth it"? There are to my knowledge no studies using randomly selected in-home and out-of-home maternal or paternal workers. I also know of no longitudinal evidence which studies the effects of parents wanting or not wanting paid employment and then pursuing or not pursuing it.

(12) Keep track of all the *costs* (as well as benefits and damages) of fathers and mothers working in and out of home, including training, and so on. For instance, I know of no cost-benefit analyses of maternal paid employment except for those which investigated WIN-type training and day care costs. Those studies were for particular populations; they were not longitudinal and investigated only short-run, financial effects of maternal paid employment. Despite much anecdotal evidence, I know of no good studies of the costs of paternal paid employment.

(13) Note carefully that most studies can apply only to one period in one culture. Some authors are punctilious about doing this, but it is generally rare. Most authors conclude with results in improbably general language.