Accommodation of Work to Family: An Analysis of Couples with Two Careers

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Every employed person is faced with the task of defining the relationship between work and family in his or her life. If one is single, without children or dependent parents to care for, this task seems relatively easy. But even in this situation the seeming ease is somewhat deceptive. Single people are very dependent on non-institutionalized relations with friends and community, and employers have sometimes found, contrary to what one might expect, that they are less likely than those who are married to accept geographical relocation.

The complications are generally greater, however, for working couples, where each partner must resolve this issue in a way that is congruent with the other's commitments. This joint resolution is a crucial life task for two-career families and it is the ways in which this task is accomplished that forms the focus for this paper.

Let us define accommodation as the degree to which work demands are fitted into family requirements. Then the way each person integrates work and family in his or her life may be described by the extent to which this integration is accommodative. The extreme points of this dimension are represented by individuals who integrate family and work requirements by focusing primarily on one or the other of these areas. The highly career-committed male executive, for instance, who follows the demands of his job wherever they take him, is an example of an almost exclusive focus on work. In contrast, the wife and mother in a relatively traditional family situation, who, even when she works, is guided by family needs rather than by job requirements, is typical of someone whose primary focus is on family. The male executive is the most non-accommodative, the traditionally-minded female who makes her outside interests secondary, the most accommodative.

Both entail potential difficulties: the executive may find himself totally detached from his family and unable to communicate with them; the accommodative
mother may not be able to give enough commitment to her work to perform effectively and get satisfaction from it. Both may be deprived of a fair and optimal chance at self-realization.

Traditional patterns have tended to approximate these extremes. The husband in our society has traditionally been minimally accommodative to family needs: his primary commitment has been to his work. And though the fruits of his labor provide for the physical needs of his family, his decisions about how best to link the family to the economy have characteristically been based solely on the requirements of his work, and have ignored the more subtle, psychological needs of his wife and children. Organizational policies have reinforced this non-accommodative stance by selectively rewarding those employees who demonstrate such a primary commitment to their work. Traditional wives' roles have been necessarily complementary: they have had to be fully accommodative, placing primary emphasis on the family, and any outside work they might do has had to be adjusted to fit this primary commitment.

But times are changing. Most of us now accept the legitimacy of women's participation in the world of work and their less accommodative orientation. And women themselves, even if their outside work was initially motivated solely by financial need, have discovered that some expression of personal competence and mastery outside the family setting often enhances their sense of well being (Barnett and Baruch, 1976). For some, of course, having to work is an indication of failure in their family situations. But when the conditions at work are right, many find that employment gives them a better opportunity to get out of themselves and to feel that they have some autonomy than the family, which may be too demanding to allow for the satisfaction of this need.

Analogously, one can find accommodative men, particularly in the middle years. These are men who resolve any potential conflict between their work and family links
by reevaluating work requirements and strengthening ties to family and community. But here too, there are different bases for such accommodation. For some it represents the expression of a basic value: a commitment to a multi-dimensional approach to life. There are successful managers, for example, who at mid-career choose to reject career advancement open to them because the additional work responsibilities would entail sacrifices of family and personal involvements to which they are committed (Rapoport, 1970; Beckhard, 1972). For others, in contrast, accommodation is a response to unfulfilled expectations at work: to positions not attained and achievements not realized (Evans, 1974; Faulkner, 1974). In this case, accommodation carries with it some of the negative consequences associated with failure (cf. Bailyn, 1977).

In general, there are forces today that are decreasing the likelihood that deviation from traditional roles will be associated with a sense of failure (Albrecht and Gift, 1975). The hazards of excessive career involvement ("workaholism") are being documented; concern about equal opportunity for women in the work force is putting pressure on organizational policies that only reward non-accommodation; and more young couples are starting out their adult lives committed to an equitable relationship between them, where each has equal opportunity for occupational and family involvements (Van Maanen et al., in press; Tarnowieski, 1973; Work in America, [1973]).

But even in a world in which options are opening up, the working couple is faced with the difficult task of managing a system based on three links, which each respond to different external and internal pressures: the wife's work link, the husband's work link, and the family link. Each link, further, consists of a complex of elements. Work links include, at a minimum, one's orientation to the content of what one is doing, one's reaction to the organization where one is employed, and one's relations with the people with whom one works: peers, supervisors, and subordinates. The family link, similarly, encompasses many different relations,
including those with one's spouse, one's children and parents, and with the community in which one lives. Somehow these complex links must all be simultaneously joined in a consistent pattern. In considering accommodation in some detail, I hope to throw light on the patterns that can be forged from these three links, and on the consequences they have for the lives of working couples.

Patterns of Accommodation

Each individual couple will, of course, find its own unique interrelation of these three links. But certain principles underlying these various patterns can be abstracted for analysis.¹

A basic distinction relates to the way in which responsibilities are allocated. Some patterns are based on the principle that responsibility for work and family is differentially distributed between the partners. Such patterns are based on a specialization of function: though both partners maintain both family and work links, each person has primary responsibility for only one area; one is more accommodative, the other more non-accommodative. Another set of patterns, in contrast, is based on a principle of equal sharing of responsibilities for work and family. In such patterns, both partners have equal commitment to and responsibility for each area. Some couples who follow the principle of equal sharing of responsibilities may be quite accommodative, others may be more non-accommodative. But wherever they fall on the dimension of accommodation, the essence of such patterns is that husband and wife have the same orientation to the relation between work and family in their lives.

This distinction should not be confused with ways of describing conjugal relations according to the division of labor in performing family tasks or in making family decisions. Differentiation and equal sharing as used here refer to the relation between paid work outside the home and care and maintenance tasks within it, and
the emphasis is on taking responsibility for an area, not only on task performance. Even a "companionship" marriage, in which "husband and wife shared both power and tasks" (Gold and Slater, 1956) is not necessarily based on equal sharing of responsibility for both work and family.

**Patterns Based on Differentiated Responsibility.** The essence of differentiated patterns is that one partner has primary responsibility for the family link and the other for his or her work link. They differ, however, from the traditional family in two important ways: first, they refer to working couples, in which both partners are in fact involved in both work and family and thus exclude the traditional situation where the wife's work link does not exist at all. Second, the decision as to which partner takes primary responsibility for which area is assumed to be based on individual negotiation and not made automatically on the basis of traditional expectations. Many of us can today point to examples of couples in which the wife's career is dominant and the husband is the more accommodative partner. And though this is not likely soon to become the modal pattern for working couples, it is differentiated in the same way as the more common case in which the wife, though committed to her work, retains a primary responsibility for the family.

The advantages of differentiation are clear. By building into the lives of working couples a hierarchy of commitments and responsibilities for each partner, the intensity of potential conflict is reduced. The process of decision making is eased by having such built-in guidelines. Decisions ranging from the everyday (such as who stays home when a child has a cold) to the more far-reaching (where to live, for instance, and what jobs to accept) are easier to handle.

Such clarity in everyday life is very appealing. The trouble is that consequences of decisions guided by such differentiation are often irreversible. And since neither work nor family situations are static, a pattern that has worked for many years may, as one gets past mid-life, produce a sense of loss and
deprivation in one or the other partner. The work-oriented or non-accommodative partner may wonder whether it was all worth while and may feel alienated from the family at a time when meaningful personal ties take on great importance. Or, the family-oriented partner may suffer from the greater work success or satisfactions of other people (particularly, perhaps, the spouse) resulting not from any differences in ability and interest, but based merely on a forced reduction in total commitment to work (see, e.g., Bailyn, 1964). Though such consequences are less likely to be disturbing if real differences guide the initial allocation—differences in age, or in abilities, or in temperament—differentiated patterns, which are one-sided by definition, entail these risks.

Patterns Based on Equally Shared Responsibilities. In patterns based on the principle of equal sharing both partners have the same commitment to each area and share equally the responsibilities of each. This situation represents the ideal life style for many young couples, who embark on their adult lives in a more equalitarian atmosphere than was true even a decade or so ago. Such "symmetrical" patterns, where there are "no monopolies for either sex in any sphere," are increasingly visible (Young and Willmott, 1973) and have been shown to be associated with an increased enjoyment of activities by both husband and wife, particularly the latter (Rapoport et al., 1974). They are supported also by analysts who feel that a meaningful and satisfactory life in a complicated world necessitates fully androgynous sex roles (Rossi, 1964; Rowe, 1974). But the principle of equal sharing, because it does not provide the guidelines implicit in differentiation, requires more attention, more energy to make it work. In general, it confronts the working couple with a more complex situation. Its potential rewards are high, but the difficulties of implementation cannot be ignored.

Without some way of reducing complexity, patterns based on equal sharing may produce, particularly at certain stages of life, a serious condition of overload
(cf. Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976). Such a stage is likely to be reached in the late twenties or early thirties—often near the seven-year "danger" point in a marriage (Chilman, 1968). Both families and work careers go through identifiable stages, which vary according to the degree of involvement they require. The difficulty at this vulnerable point in life stems from the fact that stresses in both cycles characteristically peak then: both seem to require maximum attention (Wilensky, 1961; Troll, 1975). Sociologically and biologically this is the optimal time to have young children, hence family demands are maximal. It is also the time in their employee's lives when employing organizations tend to make decisions about future placement, decisions at least partially based on the degree of involvement and commitment to work demonstrated by the employee. "I live two lives," one male teacher in his early thirties explained; "one is professional and one is as a family man. The two lives are neither mutually exclusive nor fully compatible. ...The main problem... is to establish a healthy balance between the two lives in order not to sacrifice my family life now to build for a better family life in the future. The other half of the conflict is, of course, not to sacrifice my career opportunities now..." *

And if the wife is also working, the task of establishing a "healthy balance" is even more complicated.

*This comment was made in 1970 by a 1959 graduate of M.I.T. in response to a question on the Alumni Survey of career patterns.
How can a working couple reduce the complexity of a pattern based on the principle of equal sharing, particularly at such a vulnerable stage? Three general strategies are available. The first is perhaps the most obvious: **limitation** of both partners' involvement in one or the other area. Which area is chosen will depend, primarily, on how accommodative the couple is. Couples who believe in the principle of equal sharing and tend to be non-accommodative find it useful to lessen the family demands on them by having no children, or only one child. In contrast, if the couple tends to be accommodative, they lower their career aspirations and intentionally step off the fastest promotion tracks. Both decisions, of course, may have irreversible, lifetime consequences, but by being taken jointly and shared equally, they are less likely to become sources of deep regret or acrimony. Certain environmental supports, moreover, which are increasingly seen, also help limit the demands of each area. Day care centers and housing developments with shared central facilities introduce in a new context some of the advantages of the extended family. And on the work side, there are flexible time schedules, reduced time requirements, and shared jobs.

A second approach to reducing complexity might be called **recycling**: a shift in the staging of work and family events (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976; Strober, 1975). This too is a strategy that combines individual decisions and external forces. Its main effect is to reduce the likelihood that periods of
maximum demands in the family and work areas overlap. Medical advances in diagnosing and treating prenatal abnormalities and wide use of adoptions—both of which allow families to have children at a later stage than is now deemed optimal—help couples shift the periods of peak demands in the family cycle. Analogously, the increasing incidence of successful "second careers" (Sheppard, 1971; Sarason et al., 1975) shows that periods of maximum work involvement can fruitfully be postponed to later stages in one's life. Organizations, of course, will have to stop considering age a legitimate ground for employment discrimination if such recycling options are to be widely available. But age stereotypes that constrain flexibility in employment patterns are already being challenged: by the necessity to retrain employees of all ages because of technological change; by the entrance of older women into the labor market. Ideally, the strategy of recycling allows one to make up at a later stage in life the limitations one imposed earlier. And though limitations once imposed can never be fully recovered, by balancing the consequences for the two areas, this strategy is particularly useful for couples whose orientation is near the middle of the accommodation scale.

A final strategy to reduce complexity introduces segmentation into each partner's life by strengthening the boundaries between family and work: by compartmentalizing each area so that one does not have to deal with family and work issues at the same time. This strategy seems, at first, counterintuitive, as it has been seen as a shortcoming of our contemporary society to have such a degree of segregation between work and family life. However, by allowing one to express one's commitment to each area sequentially instead of simultaneously, it eases the strain of equal sharing patterns. Leaving one's work at the office is
the day-to-day expression of this strategy. Work concerns are attended to in one place during one period of time; at home, in contrast, during the rest of the day, family needs take absolute priority. Geographical separations, such as long distance commuting (Ngai, 1974), often emerge unexpectedly, as mechanisms for allowing one of the partners to concentrate completely on work for one period of time, for instance during the week, and revert to total immersion in the family the rest of the time, as on weekends. Another innovative expression of this strategy is to apply it to a lifetime. This is not new to women, of course; indeed, sequential involvements were for many years deemed optimal for working wives and mothers. What is new is to apply this strategy to both partners of a two-career couple. Paternity leaves are a social innovation that begins to make such life planning possible.

Whatever the time frame, however, the essence of this strategy is to reduce complexity by strictly segmenting work concerns from family concerns. A comparison of two occupations—the college teacher and the engineer in industry—will emphasize the point. College teaching is often assumed to be an ideal occupation for one or both partners in an "equal sharing" family. Formal responsibilities are minimal: daily time schedules have great flexibility, the location of work is often immaterial, there are long periods with no formal duties at all. How much easier to mesh such a work schedule with a working spouse than that of the engineer who has to be away from home every day from at least 9 to 5, fifty weeks of the year. Of course there is truth in this, but an important fact is often overlooked. The engineer, despite the rigid time schedule, can segment work and family concerns, whereas the college teacher finds this much more difficult. Academic norms put heavy pressure on a professor to keep up with a field, to do research, to write, often to consult—activities that are much harder to segment than the
formal requirements of a job. And, indeed, research has shown that the permeable boundary between work and family that exists in the academic profession tends to outweigh the advantage of flexible schedules: male professors are considerably less accommodative than male engineers (Bailyn and Schein, 1976).

The above strategies indicate some of the ways working couples can reduce the complexity of patterns based on equal sharing of responsibilities. But there is still another issue, that goes beyond complexity: such patterns maximize the potential conflict between the work links of the two partners because they are based on the principle that these two links are given equal weight. This kind of conflict is much less likely to occur in differentiated patterns, where the two work links are ordered into a hierarchy of importance.

One way of dealing with this potential conflict is for the couple to participate in a joint venture, thus reducing the two work links to one. Obviously such an approach is only possible if both partners do the same or highly complementary kinds of work, though some joint ventures—such as small family businesses—require such general input that a wide variety of couples can participate. This is an intriguing way of eliminating potential conflict between the work links because it is the only one where achievements at work are truly additive, where both partners can limit their aspirations and involvements with work and yet both reap the benefits of career success. Despite this appealing quality, however, there are also drawbacks. Most obvious is the fact that the two partners' skills and interests may not mesh in the requisite way. Moreover, joint ventures require a degree of intimacy and lack of personal competitiveness that is beyond the capacity of some people. Finally, it is more difficult, in a joint venture, to reduce complexity by segmenting work and family concerns. When
Bertrand Russell and his wife started a school, for instance, it was a most successful venture for everyone except their own children, who evidently suffered from the lack of segmentation in their parents' lives (Tait, 1975). But even here inventive solutions are possible. I know one couple who in remodeling their home to house a business, specifically did not build an inner door to connect the two halves of the house. There were two entrances and one had to go outside and reenter when moving between family residence and place of work.

Joint ventures, where feasible, can meet the needs of "equal sharing" couples whether accommodative or non-accommodative. Other ways of dealing with the potential conflict between the two work links are more suited to either an accommodative or a non-accommodative orientation. Indeed, for very accommodative couples the whole issue of potential conflict between work links may never arise since all work decisions are made on the basis of the requirements of family. And though such couples may find it more difficult to meet their needs for accomplishment in the external world, the simplification of the issues involved is obvious.

An entirely different way of responding to the potential conflict between the partners' work links in patterns based on equal sharing is particularly suited to the needs of more non-accommodative or career-oriented couples. It is almost the exact opposite of the joint venture and rests on an independent relation by each partner to his or her work. In this approach, a favorite of young ambitious couples starting their joint lives at the same stages in their work careers, the decision is initially made not to resolve any conflicts between the work links, but to adapt to them. In other words, each partner follows his or her optimal career path and the couple adapts to the consequences that ensue. Full time nannies, whether they come in the form of grandmothers, au pair girls, or day care supervisors, and long distance commuting are examples of such adaptive mechanisms. Such a strategy capitalizes on the autonomy of each partner and is not likely to work well with people who are more dependent on others. Quite the contrary, it probably
is most successful when used by those who have some difficulty in forming intimate relations. Indeed, from the findings reported in the study of commuting couples (Ngai, 1974), it seems that some of these marriages survive only because of the separation imposed by the commuting. Such marriages obviously are different from those that succeed on the basis of a full sharing of lives. But for the people involved they may represent a very satisfactory alternative to complete separation.

Thus, patterns based on equal sharing of responsibilities confront couples with a number of issues to be resolved. Two have been discussed here—level of complexity and potential conflict between the two work links—along with some of the strategies that can be used in dealing with them.

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Any of these patterns, whether based on differentiated or equally shared responsibilities, may be successful in providing each partner in a working couple with satisfactory family relations and with rewarding work. But the probability of success will be different for each depending on the personal characteristics of the partners (temperament, needs, and abilities), the way in which these mesh with each other, and such other factors as family structure and the circumstances of work. The success of an "equal sharing" pattern, for example, depends on similarity of personal characteristics in the partners—at least on the major issue of how they balance the relation between work and family in their lives—whereas a differentiated pattern is likely to be more successful if these orientations are different, though complementary. Similarly, some patterns will fit better with some family structures than others. A couple pursuing an independent pattern based on equal sharing, for instance, will probably find life difficult if they try to have many children. Indeed, unless there is at least one fairly accommodative partner, the decision to have children at all, or more than one child, can
lead to a serious condition of overload.

As to the constraints imposed by the requirements of work, I have already alluded to the fact that different occupations will fit better with certain patterns than with others. There is one general point however, that must be made. The path to most higher positions in organizations—whether technical, professional, or managerial—is premised on a career progression that primarily fits the life of a non-accommodative person—indeed, in some cases it actually requires the services of an accommodative spouse (Papanek, 1973). Though we now question the assumed "naturalness" of this situation and some beginning has been made in loosening the organizational policies that propagate this assumption, it is a "fact" of organizational life as we know it today that working couples cannot ignore. It is unlikely, for instance, that any of the highest occupational positions in our society will soon be held by an accommodative person. For anyone aspiring to such a position, therefore, the appropriate differentiated pattern is more likely to be successful than one based on equal sharing of responsibilities. Indeed, research has shown that even professionally trained wives of highly career-oriented husbands find it difficult to work in their professions (Bailyn, 1973), and, if they do, the couple's marital satisfaction is likely to be low (Bailyn, 1970; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976).

What this means is that though working couples have many options in organizing their lives, these options all involve costs. It is the understanding of what these costs are that may allow us to set in motion processes that will reduce or modify them in the future, and help us minimize the toll taken by uninformed life choices.

The Dynamics of Accommodation

All of this has so far been described in a fairly static way, as though
the task of fitting the demands of work to family requirements were resolved once and for all at a single point in time. But accommodation is not, in fact, a static state. On the contrary, it reflects a continuing process of response to the changing demands of work and family and to the successes and failures experienced in each area.

Each adult, upon embarking on the twin tasks of starting a family and entering the world of work, has some idea of what he or she assumes the relation between work and family will be. This initial set of assumptions is based on the culture in which the person lives, on the examples of the parents' pattern, and on some sense by each individual of important needs and abilities. Such an initial orientation may be more or less accommodative. When it is based on the assumption that life will revolve around family concerns, the person's career and family decisions, expectations, and reactions to experience are guided by a highly accommodative orientation. At the other extreme, if one assumes that work will be the focus of one's life, one's orientation is very non-accommodative and one will make different decisions and have different expectations and different reactions to experiences. As long as these experiences are relatively congruent with the initial orientation, it is unlikely to be much modified. If, however, results turn out to be unsatisfactory or not to fit initial expectations, then a process of reevaluation may be set in motion which will change the initial orientation.

Sometimes this initial orientation is primarily shaped by external pressure: by society or parental models. If a person's own capacities, needs, and interests are not accurately reflected in such a "stereotyped" orientation, dissatisfaction is likely to result. A woman who remains a housewife because she assumes that that is what she ought to do, even though her talents go in very different directions, is likely sooner or later to suffer from this discrepancy between her initial
orientation and her talents. She may find that a reevaluation toward a more non-accommodative orientation will lead her to seek employment outside of the house and result in a more satisfactory life for her and her family. Or, a man who works very hard to become president of his company because his father is a successful business man and expects it of him, may discover that successive promotions do not bring the satisfactions he anticipated. He may realize that his needs are not met by rising in an organizational hierarchy and may find that a redirection toward a more family-centered life style provides more meaningful rewards for him.

In both these examples, a reevaluation is set in motion because of a discrepancy between an initial orientation based on externally imposed role expectations and what might be called a person's "real" self.

But even if an initial orientation is consonant in essential aspects with a person's "real" self, discrepancies may arise. The most general pressure toward reevaluation stems from the failure of primary expectations. Frequently these are "disconfirmed" expectations, but reevaluations can also be stimulated when initial expectations are exceeded. A middle manager, for instance, who receives an unexpected series of new job challenges is likely to become very work-oriented; one who fails to receive a desired promotion is likely to become more oriented to his family (Evans, 1974). Similarly, a symphony player who fails to achieve a desired seat in a top orchestra, learns to value the slower-paced life provided by the community orchestra in which he is employed (Faulkner, 1974).

Whenever there is a discrepancy between primary expectations and actual experiences, a pressure for change is built up. New orientations that respond to this pressure are likely to be based on a more realistic understanding of the circumstances in which one lives, and hence more likely to lead to satisfaction with one's life. Sometimes, of course, circumstances can be overwhelming. But
occasionally even such traumatic events as the loss of a job or the death of a spouse can force a reevaluation which in the long run will lead to a more satisfactory fit between one's orientation and the circumstances of one's life.

At other times, however, a change in life circumstances or in basic values may transform a good fit between orientation and experience into a discrepancy. In fact, any major discontinuities in one's life may make a reevaluation of initial orientations necessary. Thus a group of happy, family-centered, thirty-year-old women were found to be maladjusted at seventy when their children had left home and were inaccessible; in contrast, a group of unsatisfied thirty-year-old housewives who changed their basic orientation and became "work-centered," were found, at seventy, to be very contented (Maas and Kuypers, 1974).

Personalities vary, of course, in their capacity to react constructively, and sometimes no reevaluation occurs despite very great discrepancies between orientations and life experiences. This may happen when a person's investment in the initial orientation is so strong—for reasons probably related to the early development of the personality—that change is seen as impossible. An example might be the man who continues to work hard and long, ignoring most other aspects of life, despite the fact that he no longer gets any enjoyment or sense of accomplishment from his work; or the woman who finds her life empty after her children are gone, but is unable to reorient herself to activities outside the home. Such unresolved discrepancies between orientations and experiences may on occasion lead to depression or to other symptoms of distress such as alcoholism (cf. McClelland et al., 1972; Wilsnack, 1972).

There are also external constraints to change. Most organizations, for instance, put pressure on their employees to stay highly involved in their work, and feel that something is wrong if they become very accommodative. But as long as not all the work that must be done is intrinsically challenging, and as long as or-
ganizations must find a place for their "plateaued" employees (Goode, 1967), such secondary accommodation may actually be more beneficial than disruptive to the enterprise as a whole (Bailyn, 1977). Indeed, we know that it cuts down on employee turnover (Getchell, 1975).

More important to the concerns of this paper, however, is the impact of a change in orientation on a couple's pattern of adaptation. What happens when one partner changes and the other doesn't, or when both change but in opposite directions? Although we do not know very much about this yet, it seems that some of the satisfactions of the later years stem from the fact that reduced demands from work and family permit couples to share their lives more equally (Deutscher, 1964). Thus a change by one partner of a differentiated couple in the direction of the other one is likely to be adaptive. Sometimes, though, there is a criss-crossing of previous orientations (Gutmann, 1973; Lowenthal et al., 1975): the accommodative partner becomes so non-accommodative and the non-accommodative one so accommodative, that a reversed differentiated pattern may result.

There is also, of course, the possibility of radical change. The second career, for instance, may require relocation and certainly requires reestablishment. Though sometimes this takes the form of a joint venture and therefore does not lead to direct conflict with the spouse's work link, some readaptation between the partners will always be necessary. Even more disruptive to established couple patterns are the reevaluations that sever the family link entirely. Divorce at all stages—even after decades of living together—is becoming more prevalent (Glick and Norton, 1973), and we are only beginning to understand how men and women in different circumstances adapt to it (see, e.g., Weiss, 1975). It is interesting, however, that some analysts see divorce as the "chance of a new lifetime" for mothers (Brown et al., 1976), and others suggest that divorce,
(severing the family link), as a response to an unmanageable situation, is no more extreme than the severance of the wife's work link, which happens when a competent and committed professional wife resumes the traditional family role when she has a child (Holmstrom, 1972).  

Obviously, there is much still to be learned about these dynamics. Some couple patterns will change during the course of life development, others not, depending on the experiences encountered and the capacity of the partners to adapt to new circumstances. Clearly the goal is neither change nor stability for its own sake, but change or stability in order to achieve a workable resolution of family and work demands for each partner that meshes well with the needs of the other.

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All indications point to an increase in the number of dual-career couples the future. As more people attempt to work out the problems of such double careers they will exert pressure on employing organizations to reconsider some of the policies that now restrain available options. But the complications introduced by superimposing two work links on the family link will remain. And though innovative resolutions will emerge in dealing with different degrees of accommodation in the partners, the potentially successful combinations are not limitless. It is not possible for both partners in a working couple to do everything. Some choices will always be necessary: regarding work, perhaps; or family; or both. Let us hope that the continuing study of the situation faced by two-career couples will enable them to make these life choices more rationally. The more accurately the reality of their situation is perceived, the more likely it is that their chosen life style will be successful.
Notes

1. Detailed accounts of the lives of two career-couples are available in Rapoport and Rapoport (1976), Holmstrom (1972), Lein et al. (1974).

2. Bebbington (1973) points out that the stress involved in these patterns may replace, and be preferable to, stress stemming from an unsatisfactory resolution of conflict between desired and actual roles by one of the partners of a dual-working couple.

3. Pleck (1975) points out that the boundary between work and family is "differentially permeable" for men and women. Segmentation, therefore, requires that men stop the spillover of work into family areas, and women the spillover from family to work.

4. Some of the issues involved in such joint ventures are examined by Epstein (1971) in her investigation of husband-wife law partnerships and by Rapoport and Rapoport (1976) in their discussion of a husband-wife partnership in architecture.

5. Turner (1971) offers the intriguing hypothesis that since external constraints to divorce are decreased in dual-career households (particularly those patterned on a principle of equal sharing), personal and individual compatibilities are more determining of marital stability or dissolution in these cases. This hypothesis gets support from an analysis of couples in communal households, where external constraints to divorce are even less (Jaffe and Kanter, 1976).
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