

FLUCTUATING FORCES WITHIN FAMILIES: PSYCHOSOCIAL  
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manuscript is to discuss how behavioral patterns or forces within families have fluctuated across decades of time, and to analyze the implications of these changes in terms of the psychosocial development of children.

Humans are social beings, and individuals in all cultural groupings form relationships that have come to be known as families. The classic (structural-functional) definition of a family is a social group characterized by a common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction (Eshlerman, 1997). Furthermore, adults of both sexes are included, and at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children have been conceived from that relationship or have been adopted (Berns, 2004). Others see this definition as very narrow and exclusive, with some families having one or multiple adults and children from reproduction of adults other than persons in the family living in the household. However constituted, families have proven to be adaptive and resilient organizations that satisfy the needs of their members in an assortment of possibilities.

Throughout history, families have been shifted by social and economic forces (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005). Yet, across time and cultures, there have been patterns of behaviors within families that function for the same general purposes, although the appearances of these patterns are different. These differences in patterns tend to impact behavioral outcomes for children and partially explain some of the variations in developmental configurations. The focus of this discussion is on the family patterns of (a) affectionate relationships among the adults or mutual obligations to protect, share, and help one another; (b) family living arrangements or structures that are characterized by the larger culture, e.g., traditional, extended, and singlehood; and (c) financial support and exchanges, i.e., the assumption of financial responsibility for the welfare of the group.

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## CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY

Anthropology, psychology, sociology, religion, social work, and law are the major disciplines that have contributed to our understanding of the concept of family. Concepts are abstractions that are used as building blocks for the development of hypotheses, propositions, and theories (Eshleman, 1997). Within the area of family studies, the structural-functional frame of reference or functional analysis, is a major theoretical orientation in sociology and psychology (Eshleman, 1997). Within this framework, families are composed of interdependent parts that are linked together as a whole entity with intense relationships within. Consequentially, since the parts of a system need each other, there exists a social bond with order, cohesion, stability, and persistence throughout the entity. Thus, social scientists can examine relationships that are internal to the family (husband-wife, siblings, etc), as well as external influences on the family from other systems of society (economic, religious, etc).

Importantly, families have the capacity to reorganize in response to internal and external forces; that is, families can adapt so they can continue to function in response to challenges (Cox & Paley, 2004). It is the adaptations and reorganizations of families that differentially impact child behavioral outcomes. Changes in the family at one level impact multiple levels that resonate throughout the system, resulting in changes in patterns of behavior. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of development captures a conceptual framework that illustrates how larger systems influence the development of children, with their physical, emotional, and cognitive domains embedded within these contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes that children interact with the environment in a bi-directional or transactional manner. The environment consists of interrelated levels of social forces that influence the lives of children both directly and indirectly.

This discussion examines selected concepts within Bronfenbrenner's model to illuminate the forces within the lives of children that may fluctuate with varying degrees of behavioral outcomes. Within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model are the microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem is the system closest to children and includes the family and relationships vary according to the sex of the adults. The mesosystem is the interrelationships among the immediate members in the child's life as characterized by the larger systems. Thus, traditional, extended, and single parent households shall be discussed. The macrosystem is the culture and subculture that impacts children through its beliefs and ideologies. Within the United States, the ideology of capitalism and its belief in the free market has impacted the material resources of children. Therefore, the financial arrangements in which families have to operate because of economic forces will be discussed.

In a discussion of family patterns, one of the important variables that differentially influences and shapes families' responses and adaptations is race

or minority status. Throughout the manuscript, discussions of racial status of families will be included.

#### AFFECTIONATE ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

An affectionate relationship between two adults is usually the building block for forming families. Generally, this pattern of two adults bonding and beginning families has been prevalent in most cultures. Historically, adult affectionate relationships have been considered those between a man and a woman, although countries with Judeo-Christian backgrounds have been exposed to historical adult arrangements of one male with multiple females, e.g., King Solomon in Old Testament readings. In addition, cross-cultural studies note varied arrangements of affectionate relationships among adults; for example, one female as a loving wife for a family of brothers as among the Todas, a non-Hindu tribe in India (Eshleman, 1997). When it comes to the sex of the adult members, however, the male-female bond appears to have been the strongest across cultures and throughout history. Currently, the idea of loving bonds between only members of the opposite sex to form families is shifting; other types of adult pairings are emerging.

#### MALE AND FEMALE PARTNERS

The traditional affectionate relationship between adults has been between males and females, although it is widely acknowledged that the loving bonds between the two have sometimes been weak or nonexistent. Pressures from family members and financial considerations have been prevalent as strong motives for individuals of the opposite sex to join together to form families. Societal mores, norms, and the patriarchal system have reinforced these unions, allowing limited options for females. Indeed, Coontz (1997, 2000) examines the early history of this male-female affectionate bonding, generally characterized as being in love, as a reason for forming families, and finds that this idealized form has not always been as widespread as commonly believed by social scientists; in some areas it has rarely existed in history.

This type of adult (male and female) bond has experienced desertion, spouse and child abuse, and children being born outside the relationship. Yet this image of husband/breadwinner and wife/homemaker lovingly bonding together to rear the offspring of this legitimate coupling has persisted, despite evidence that it does not always conform to that beneficial pattern. The myths and realities of this arrangement have been exposed (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005), yet this idealized family life image as the optimal arrangement has prevailed.

As income from a sole provider became inadequate during the sixties to maintain the desired lifestyle, more women entered the labor force and fewer women are currently full time housewives. A variety of nontraditional family forms are emerging, according to Coates (2003), that will offer more options in coming generations; for example, there will be more families which include

both adults as breadwinners, male-male or female-female partnerships, group living without sexual intimacy, etc. Although male- female bonding is not as prevalent as it once was, when it comes to psychosocial behavioral outcomes for children and adolescents, evidence indicates that these types of families lead to positive results (Manning & Lamb, 2003).

Children living in homes with two heterosexual married adults, not necessarily male/breadwinner and female/homemaker arrangements, have higher levels of positive child behavioral outcomes on measures of social competence, social adjustment, and academic achievement (Berns, 2004). This type of social setting creates a stable, secure environment for children because of the existence of two adults to share the tasks involved in successful parenting, e.g., warm and sensitive adults, support for self-actualization needs of children, ample financial resources, etc.

Yet, in some of these homes, all is not well and children experience marital separation or divorce. Most scholars agree that between 40 and 52 percent of all first marriages end in divorce (National Center for Health Statistics, 2001). In 2003, 10.2 percent of the population was divorced (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). When children from divorced parents are compared with children from intact, married families, a meta-analysis of the empirical findings reveals that young adults from divorced families, as compared to young adults from continuously married families, exhibit more depression, have lower levels of marital quality in their own marriages, poorer physical health, and less life satisfaction. Moreover, they achieved lower levels of educational, financial, and occupational status (Braver, Hipke, Ellman, & Sandler, 2004). Further, children of divorced parents may experience behavioral problems, a decline in school performance, and other indications of adjustment problems. Yet, there is a high degree of variability in children's responses and coping techniques with divorce in the family (Braver, Hipke, Eellman, & Sandler, 2004). Other variables (poverty, having to move to poorer neighborhoods, lack of financial resources, etc) in the lives of children may partially account for some of the negative findings, rather than divorce per se. Indeed, the resources available to children after the divorce and the availability of the noncustodial parent influence the post-divorce adaptation and outcomes.

Amato and Keith (1991) in a review of the studies of the effects of divorce on children found that not all drop out of school or suffer from long term problems. The situation is more complex than a simple statement of divorce as a negative experience for children. Research indicates that children function better in single-head of household families rather than in conflicted homes with two married adults (Peterson & Zill, 1986). The age of the child, financial and emotional support for the mother, economic and community resources, and personal characteristics of both the caregiver and the child all contribute to the adjustment outcomes for children from divorced families. Yet the evidence is also clear that children living in single female-head households are worse off financially, and thus have more troubling issues, than those in two-income or male-only-working with high income families (Manning &

Lamb, 2003). Interestingly, a difficult economy tends to dampen divorce rates; couples have fewer financial resources, making it more cost-efficient to stay together (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005).

In any case, marital conflicts that are frequent, intense, physical, unresolved, and child related have a negative influence on children's development (Grych & Fincham, 2001). Marital conflict is related to poor parenting, poor adjustment of children, increased likelihood of parent-child conflict, and conflict between siblings (Fincham, 2004). The male- female affectionate relationship can also turn violent, with detrimental effects on children. In the year 2000, 54 percent of violence towards women was committed by someone who they knew intimately (Fields, 2003). In a family with an atmosphere of violence towards women, children also are often abused or neglected. According to Cook, Woolard, and McCollum (2004), children suffer immediate and long-term consequences as witnesses to violence towards their mothers, as protectors of abused mothers, as incidental victims of abuse by the abuser, or as targets used by perpetrators to retaliate against or to coerce mothers. Approximately 11 to 20 per cent of children report recollections of violence in their families (Cook, Woolard, & McCollum, 2004). The annual incidence of child abuse and neglect is over one and a half million children at the rate of 23.1 per 1000 (National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect, 1996).

Research reviews indicate that the negative impacts of abuse and neglect are pervasive. Problems of aggression, depression, social withdrawal, and poor academic achievement are prevalent (Trickett, Kurtz, & Pizzigati, 2004). Despite the noting of problems that sometimes are found in this type of family bond, especially since the 1960s (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005), it has remained, in the opinions of many people the ideal family structure, and it is evoked in public discourse by politicians, moral leaders, the mass media, and social commentators. Yet data compiled by a Bureau of Census (Day, 1996; Fields, 2003) project the number of households with male and female partners will decline in the future: in 1995 it was 25.2 and it was 23.3 in 2003 of all households, compared to a projected figure of 20.1 for 2010 of all households.

#### FEMALE AND FEMALE PARTNERS

Although, in earlier times, females have formed unions, the issue has come to the forefront now as the gay pride movement expands. Surveys in North America and Europe note that around 2 or 3 percent of women identify themselves as lesbian (Vasta, Miller, & Ellis, 2004). Currently, the larger controversy is whether marriage between two females should be lawful with all of the benefits of male and female partnerships. The state of Connecticut recently approved a law extending to gay and lesbian couples the same rights and protections guaranteed to married heterosexuals (Editorial Page, *The New York Times*, April 23, 2005). Partners in these relationships can receive tax and insurance benefits, family leave rights, and hospital visits. The law also includes, however, an amendment defining marriage as a union between a man

and a woman. The passage of this bill is going in the opposite direction of a number of states that are banning gay and lesbian unions. Regardless of the outcome of the controversy over this issue, female and female partnerships will continue to exist.

A subject of continuous debate has been the effect of female and female type of affectionate bonding on children. Lesbian couples have become parents by rearing the children of a partner from a previous heterosexual relationship, becoming parents through artificial insemination of one of the partners using a donation from a sperm bank, informal arrangements, or adoption. Thirty-eight percent of white lesbian couples and 61 percent of black lesbian couples have children present in their households (Dandg & Frazier, 2005). The focus has been on whether the children will suffer from gender identity issues, become maladjusted, and or suffer from sexual molestation. Patterson (1992) completed a review of studies investigating children reared in lesbian homes and found that these children were no more likely to have a gay or lesbian orientation as adults or anxiety disorders or depression than children reared in male-female households. Finally, there is no evidence that lesbian parents are likely to sexually abuse their children. The most frequent sexual abusers of females are biological fathers, followed by stepfathers (Russell, 1984). Nevertheless, lesbian parents have issues that are not part of the lifestyle of male-female bonding. Society disapproves of their relationships, there is a deep resentment of homosexuals in the cultural milieu, and there are often court battles over their parental rights to their children from previous marriages (Arnup, 1995).

When lesbian relationships are examined, it emerges that the partners are more likely to share equally in the division of household labor and childcare than are partners in male- female bonds (Park, 1998). They are also viewed as being just as committed to their relationships as are heterosexual couples.

Same-sex couples are less well off economically in comparison to married opposite-sex couples (Dang & Frazier, 2005). Black female same-sex couples report median yearly incomes that are \$9000 less and black male same-sex couples have \$2000 less in median yearly incomes than black married opposite sex couples. When compared to their white counterparts, same-sex black female pairs report \$18,000 and same-sex black males report \$20,000 less. The lower levels of income influence the well-being of children in the households (Morris & Gennetian, 2003). Evidence indicates that the child behavioral outcomes most impacted by income levels are engagement in school and positive interaction with peers.

#### MALE AND MALE RELATIONSHIPS

Gay relationships have often been portrayed negatively, although they have existed historically in human societies. A recent survey of North American and European males indicated that 3 to 5 percent identified themselves as gay (Vasta, Miller, & Ellis, 2004). During the 1960s and 1970s, gay men were

often portrayed as queens, sissies, fairies, and bar hoppers (Chauncey, 1994). They were often viewed as sexual predators, preying on young boys. Yet male and male partnerships are becoming more visible in society. The formidable *New York Times* newspaper, in its section on weddings, now features male and male bonds as well as female and female bonds.

Children in these partnerships are offspring from previous heterosexual relationships, children who have been adopted, or through informal arrangements. There are approximately 163,000 same-sex households in the United States with children under the age of 18 years; this compares to about 25 million married-couple households with children under 18 (National Council on Family Relations Report, 2003). Forty-six percent of black male some-sex couples and 24 percent of white same-sex couples have children present in their households (Dang & Frazier, 2005). There are a limited number of studies of children in this family type.

Initial studies have found that children who realize that parent is homosexual usually express confusion, shame, disbelief, and guilt at first (Berns, 2004). In a study of sons of gay fathers, researchers found that son's identification as either gay or heterosexual was not related to the amount of time that he had lived with his father, how accepting he was of his father's homosexuality, or to the quality of his relationship with his father (Bailey, Nothnagel, & Wolfe, 1995). There is little evidence that socialization alone or exposure to a gay or lesbian parent explains the development of sexual orientation, thus alleviating one on the major fears of some relating to behavioral outcomes for children living with homosexual parents. The proportion of children reared by homosexual parents who adopt non-heterosexual identities is comparable to that among children raised by heterosexual parents (Vasta, Miller, & Ellis, 2004).

In sum, the sexes of the adults forming families have shifted, although, generally, families still begin with two adult figures. Children do best in married male-female adult relationships, although no major harm has been noted for children living in male-male and female-female affectionate relationships. The negative impacts for children from affectionate relationships have been other variables (e.g., poverty, abuse, etc) in the environment rather than the genders of the adults in the affectionate relationship in their lives.

#### FAMILY LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OR STRUCTURES

Family living arrangements have varied throughout history depending on external pressures and cultural mores and norms. There are a number of classification systems for analysis of families; however, for the purpose of this discussion, categories are used that have enabled scholars to extensively measure the impact of family structure on child behavioral outcomes: traditional, extended, and single-head-of household. There is a consensus among social scientists that socialization of children is one of the primary

functions of families, and that variation in family structures leads to different consequences for children (Eshleman, 1997)

*Traditional.* The traditional family structure in western cultures is one of male and female married adults with children. Numerous studies have reported an association between family structure and children's well being. On the average, children are served best when they are reared by their married, biological parents who have low-conflict relationships (Manning & Lamb, 2003; Parke, 2003). In 1996, two-thirds of children in the United States were living with two married biological parents and less than 2 percent with two cohabiting, biological parents. Modern trends indicate, however, that divorce rates are growing and that children are increasingly being reared in single parent households or other diverse family structures.

Critics of contemporary society point to the decline of traditional families for the subsequent increase in social problems, e.g. poverty among children, the rise in teenage pregnancy rates, large numbers of school-dropouts, juvenile crime, etc (Park, 2003). For these social commentators, it is the decline of the traditional family that is the source of society's ills, and governmental policies should be directed at strengthening the traditional family. Others think it is unlikely that families will return to a structure that is based on a mythical past, especially since it was rooted in an economic system that is unlikely to return with the advent of the global economy. Moreover, Park (2003) suggests that it is the characteristics of those who marry and stay married, persons who are committed, loyal, and oriented to the future, that promote the well-being of children, rather than marriage per se.

Some individuals who are engaged in male and female affectionate bonds do not legalize their relationships by marrying. These pairs are cohabiting. In 2000, there were 4.9 million opposite-sex couples cohabiting and about 40 percent included children in the United States (Park, 2003). In comparison to married couples, couples who cohabit had fewer economic resources, were less stable, and had more negative parenting (Manning & Lamb, 2003). Therefore, children residing with cohabiting couples do not do as well when compared to children living in families with their married biological parents and married stepfamilies. McLanahan and Casper, (2001) note that marriage is more common in areas where women's employment opportunities and earnings are low, welfare benefits are low, and men's employment opportunities are high. The increases in women's employment parallel the decline in marriage.

There has been an increase in delaying the age of first marriage and the percentage of young adults who have never married. In 1970, among young adults in the United States, ages 30-34, 6 percent of women and 9 percent of men had never married, in contrast to 16 percent and 27 percent respectively in 1990 (McLanahan & Casper, 2001). Various speculations are offered to explain the decline of male-female living arrangements: a decline in employment for men, an increase in the number of families that are working poor, an increase in the number of women entering the labor market, and an increase in divorce

rates. Yet, statistics continue to show that this is the best family arrangement, given current governmental policies towards families, for children's behavioral outcomes in social competency, academic achievement, and self-adjustment.

*Extended families.* Extended kinship structures are the major family living arrangements in most societies in the world (Hutter, 1998). Extended families are close kin relations within and across generations whose members are intensely involved in the reciprocal exchange of goods, services, and emotional support (McAdoo, 1978). Before industrialization in America, families consisted of household members who were relatives, not blood relatives, apprentices, and others, since they performed a range of functions and activities (Coontz, 1997,2000).

The artisan class played a defining role in preindustrial economic settings. The work of artisans was primarily conducted in the home, where specialized occupations and arts and crafts were transmitted to succeeding generations of children, relatives, and apprentices taken in by the families. Thus, strong, stable, extended family relationships persisted and shaped society (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005).

Extended families are often intergenerational and are a common family living arrangement among African Americans. This family living arrangement was common in Africa and was brought to America by slaves. Also, it is used for economic survival reasons since a large percentage of African American families and single mothers are mired in an economic quagmire for combined reasons, e.g., racism, poor education and neighborhood schools, job discrimination, etc. (Billingsley, 1992; Sudarkasa, 1988; Taylor, Chatters, & Tucker, 1990). In 2000, one in three African American men, two in five African American women and Latino men, and slightly more than half of Latino women were in jobs that paid poverty wages (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 2000). African American families are continuing this tradition of maintaining extended families, in many instances, as a means of obtaining and maintaining a middle class life style.

The extended family living arrangement is emerging again among middle and working class families as they adjust to globalization of the labor market, the downsizing of companies, and the shifting of locations of factories that offer stable employment. Families are forming what is becoming known as post modern living arrangements, relying on kin networks, sharing housing arrangements, and having multiple wage earners within families (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005).

During the recent lingering period of economic downturn, there have been large numbers of college-educated professionals among the unemployed. Of the workers unemployed for six months or longer in 2002, 35 percent were over 45 years old, 18 percent had college degrees, and 20 percent were executive, professional and managerial workers (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005).

Working class families have been hard hit by job losses in the past two decades with the globalization and deindustrialization of America (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005). The new unemployed have been long time workers in the labor

market, and some have still not found jobs; of those who have found fulltime work, the jobs pay less than what they had been earning in their previous positions. Numerous families are sliding downward in living standards and out of the middle class. It is the entering of women into the labor market that has kept numerous families afloat, economically. As a consequence of these economic conditions, families are adjusting by forming different lifestyles. Emerging trends in postmodern families are financing family budgets with dual wage earners, sharing living quarters with another family, relying more on kin networks, delaying pregnancy, going childless, postponing marriage, and staying single.

There are limited studies of children's behavioral outcomes in these postmodern families. It remains to be seen if multiple caretakers and shifting numbers of adult persons in households will have a negative impact. We do know, however, that factors that stabilize the economic situation for children should have favorable outcomes for children. We know also that children living in female-heads-of-households families are more likely to live in poverty, with its negative impact on their well being.

*Single-Parent Households.* Single parent households may be characterized as families headed by male or female adults who have never married, or are divorced or widowed. There are differences within single-parents households that reflect the status; however, this discussion is focused on what happens to children and, thus, the similarities override the differences. Single-parent families can be found across socioeconomic classes, with middle class and professional women sometimes voluntarily becoming single mothers.

The impact on children has been investigated mostly for low income and teenage females, with findings indicating that children are negatively impacted by their mothers' marital status (Zinn & Eitzen, 2005). Male and female children and adolescents of single parents are more likely to drop out of school, become teen mothers, and live in poverty (Newman, 2001). These families are often especially vulnerable since the neighborhoods they live in are, for the most part, less likely to have public resources to assist families. Nearly half of all single-mothers live in poverty, and this is especially true of African American single mothers. The increase in single mothers has resulted from rising divorce rates and rising rate of births of children born to single females (Hutter, 1998).

Children from working poor families score lower on measures of academic achievement, physical development, cognitive functioning, social development, and self-control than children from more economically advantaged families (Newman, 2001). This family structure is projected to grow in the future.

In sum, families have formed living arrangements to foster their adaptations to their environments and assure the survival of their members. With the current changes in economic conditions relating to globalization, economic downturn, lower employment for middle and working class young men, there are not as many eligible financially viable males to marry and form

families, thus postmodern family structures are emerging. Cross-cultural investigations indicate that families are undergoing changes worldwide as a result of the social forces of industrialization and urbanization (Hutter, 1998). The impact on children having to do with some of the structures is partially known, e.g., single heads of households, and relying on kin networks. There are numerous investigations and review of literature publications on the family structures of single female heads of households and extended families. Future research is needed on the impact of this global shifting of family living arrangements on children. Importantly, it is not the family that is the sole source of factors that have negative impacts on child behavioral outcomes. A majority of the variables that have been identified with poor child behavioral outcomes, flaws in the health care delivery systems, deterioration of educational systems, prevalence of sex and violence in media, and unsafe streets and neighborhoods are the major responsibility of other agencies in society (Hutter, 1998).

#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND EXCHANGES

From the above discussion, it is clear that economic issues have shaped families as they adapt and adjust to their family incomes. A major function of families is the economic support of its members and this has shifted over time. In preindustrial families, every member was a part of an economic unit that produced food, clothing and shelter for its members, as well as, in many cases, goods for the outside world. With industrialization and the moving of men out of the household to industries for work, the patterns of economic support shifted. The arrangement of the traditional family had always involved men bringing their wages to the household in exchange for affection and comfortable surroundings being maintained by the female. In turn, the female expected to be maintained economically by the husband, along with children who she produced within this arrangement. This family type was identified as modern and existed mainly among white middle and upper class families. With the strong economic changes in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, most families have dual-earner incomes or single earner incomes. Out of necessity, as in families before the industrial revolution, financially supporting the group has become a family endeavor. Two decades earlier, women with children under six seldom worked outside the home. In 2000, 71 per cent of single mothers and 63 percent of married mothers with children under six years of age were in the labor market (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002).

The mother/nurturer and father/breadwinner family arrangement is undergoing pressure since most mothers must earn income outside the family setting to provide for the family. This has increased the burden on women since they have to contribute to the family economic resources as they continue to be the primary caretakers. Women are stressed in contemporary society, whether they are female heads of households, cohabiting with partners, or married. These changes are occurring worldwide (Hutter, 1998). In all

instances, there are common problems for women: work overload, role conflict, and increasing pressures to stay in the labor market whatever the cost to the family. Women often respond to stress from overload in two ways: withdraw from family or engage in frequent family conflict episodes (Crouter & Bumpus, 2004). Withdrawal from family interaction is a temporary solution, however, and the continual use of this adaptive strategy is not good for children. It has also been found that, when single mothers of adolescents give themselves time alone, they are less likely to transmit their anxious feelings to their offspring (Crouter & Bumpus, 2004). Although women have helped with the family income, men have not reciprocated with an equal increase in participation in household tasks and child care (Hutter, 1998). One possible explanation is that, even in families where women are working full-time, often the husband's income is higher and, thus, he is still seen as the economic provider (Crouter & Bumpus, 2004).

One of the consequences of both parents being in the labor market is the increase in responsibilities for children in the family. With families not making enough money to pay for household help, younger children are being called on to perform numerous household tasks and adolescents are being asked to enter the labor market to further supplement the family income. Some see this change as providing valuable experience for children that will help to make them responsible citizens in the future. Yet there is little evidence that mundane repetitive household tasks for children foster any broad developmental gains (Larson, 2004). When developmental benefits for adolescents are examined, the findings are mixed. Longitudinal studies suggest that during adolescence, employment of over 20 hours per week is associated with greater delinquency, school misconduct, and substance use (Larson, 2004). However, this is not to suggest that youngsters should not help with household tasks to promote the welfare of the family in situations where both parents are in the labor market. With latchkey children and preadolescents caring for younger siblings, some social scientists are wondering aloud who is minding those children.

#### CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Emerging trends indicate that forces within families are shifting and there has been a visible impact on children. Some of the arrangements are familiar and are reappearing in larger number :e g., single wage earners, extended families, economic sustenance as a family endeavor. Women will continue to work outside the home whether or not they are married or have partners willing to help with the children. The variable that impacts families the strongest and results in the most negative child behavioral outcomes is family income. Therefore, any suggestion related to improving the lives of children in families, regardless of family structure or the sex of the adults in the affectionate relationships, must include ways of increasing family income. There is limited evidence that increasing income for families benefits children. This finding

suggests that when parents are not as stressed about the family budget, they do not engage as often in negative parenting techniques. An increase in income gives the family more resources to invest in their children.

One of the potential shortcomings of advocating a policy of increasing the availability of funds to children is that Americans have not felt a collective responsibility for America's children. The general feeling is that having children is a personal decision and, thus, a personal responsibility. Further, with the availability of sex education, birth control, and advanced technology for controlling reproduction, it is generally felt that pregnancy is a private decision and so is the financial responsibilities that follow.

More children will be at risk in the future, if present emerging trends continue. Research-based prevention programs can alleviate potential maladaptive behavioral outcomes. Mental health services should be expanded with an extensive outreach component. Policies should be designed to promote strengths at the individual, family, and community levels. For example, policies that promote positive early development will prevent future problems because they increase the strengths and resources for all (Sandler, Ayers, Suter, Schulz, & Twokey-Jacops, 2004).

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