

IMFC REVIEW

A PUBLICATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY CANADA



MATERNAL CARES

What science is teaching us about the nature of nurturing our young

FAMILY PLANNING

New trends in urban architecture are putting social problems on the drawing board

CANADA'S MISSING DIVORCE DEBATE

Divorce as a social phenomenon is widespread, and some scholars say the effects can last a lifetime. So why aren't we talking about it?

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE

A valid "lifestyle choice" or another example of dumb sex?

MOTHERS AND THE MEDIA

The media is reporting that moms are stressed out... because they are

WHO'S PLAYING AROUND NOW?

Overscheduled parents mean overscheduled kids

IS SEX MAKING STUDENTS SICK?

As depression becomes more common on campus, everyone is asking: What is going on with kids?



ease up... they could *still* be at the library.

Researchers everywhere are wondering what to do with all the time on their hands since discovering **FAMILYindex.net**...

Where's your research team?



features

MATERNAL CARES 8

What science is teaching us about the nature of nurturing our young
by Peter Jon Mitchell

FAMILY PLANNING 13

New trends in urban architecture are putting social problems on the drawing board. Can we help impoverished neighbourhoods through better infrastructure and design?
by Peter Jon Mitchell

WANTED: CANADA'S MISSING DIVORCE DEBATE 17

Divorce as a social phenomenon is widespread, and some scholars say the effects can last a lifetime. So why aren't we talking about it?
by Kate Fraher

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE 20

A valid "lifestyle choice" or another example of dumb sex?
by Jennifer Roback Morse

MOTHERS AND THE MEDIA 22

The media is reporting that moms are stressed out...because they are
by Andrea Mrozek

WHO'S PLAYING AROUND NOW? 26

Overscheduled parents mean overscheduled kids
by Dave Quist

THE JOYS OF CAREGIVING 28

Caring for aging loved ones need not be a crisis
by Caroline Tapp-McDougall

departments

FROM THE IMFC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 2

CONTRIBUTORS 3

NEWS 4

RESEARCH ROUNDUP 5

Q&A 6

Is sex making students sick? • *An interview with Dr. Miriam Grossman, campus psychiatrist*

REVIEWS 30

Unprotected: A campus psychiatrist reveals how political correctness in her profession endangers every student *by Anonymous, M.D.* • The Parenting Crisis *by Scott Wooding* • Marriage And Caste In America: Separate and unequal families in a post-marital age *by Kay S. Hymowitz* • The Boomer Factor *by Reginald W. Bibby*

CLOSING WORDS 32

Europe's family tomes

• FROM THE IMFC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



SPRING ALWAYS AMAZES ME. As we shake off the last vestiges of winter, new life virtually explodes out of the world around us. Brown lawns turn green once again, leaves and flowers begin to fill in a bleak landscape, birds return with their songs and the warmth of the air works its way into our psyche. Then comes summer – when children enjoy their break from school, playgrounds get a good working out and we maximize our daylight hours.

Many families use a calendar in the kitchen to keep track of all the members' activities as we maximize those long summer days. Some are colour-coded, others simply list the activity, time and location. Between sports,

music, playdates, church, club and family events, many calendars are chock-a-block full. How does your's look? Many mothers work to balance their own work schedules with the hectic lives of their families.

The theme of this issue of the *IMFC Review* magazine is maternal cares: a focus which explores the hectic, rewarding, and beautiful moments of motherhood – and the policy implications thereof on Parliament Hill.

Peter Jon Mitchell has done in depth research on epigenetics, a new field of science that explores theories of nature versus nurture – and the role of mothers in both. Who we are may be determined by a combination of those two factors – in ways that will surprise you.

We're pleased to have Jennifer Roback Morse return to the *IMFC Review* with her take on women who choose to be single moms. What are some of the consequences of this choice?

Caroline Tapp-McDougall takes on the pressures of the "Sandwich Generation," those adults who are taking care of aging parents and still raising their children. This squeeze is affecting more of us as we live longer and have children later in life.

In "Mothers and the Media," Andrea Mrozek explores views of motherhood from two very different standpoints. How does the mainstream media view motherhood and is it reflective of reality, or do stories in the media on motherhood influence our views and the social policy that goes with them?

Kate Fraher asks why Canadian research on the emotional effects of divorce is virtually non-existent. We can assume that children and parents are hurt through divorce, but if we had research on this common feature of so many lives, would we be able to help those who have been affected by it?

In addition, I've approached the concept of how structured our children's time is and whether we're doing them any favours by having the kitchen calendar filled to capacity. Kids' calendars tend to be hyper-scheduled when parents' calendars are – perhaps, this spring, alongside annual spring cleaning in the house and yard, we need to do a little purging of our personal calendars as well.

I hope that you will schedule some reading of the *IMFC Review* into your busy schedule this summer. As always, please forward your thoughts to us. Until next time,

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Dave Quist".

Dave Quist
Executive Director, IMFC

publisher

Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, an initiative of
Focus on the Family Canada
Box 9800 Stn Terminal
Vancouver, BC V6B 4G3

editor-in-chief

Dave Quist

managing editor

Andrea Mrozek

copy editor

Brigitte Pellerin

art director

Andrea Smith

notice of disclaimer of liability

Although care has been taken in preparing the information contained in this document, the publisher is not responsible for or liable for errors, misinformation, misprints or typographical errors.

The opinions cited herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily constitute those of the IMFC, Focus on the Family Canada, or its board of directors.

© 2007 Focus on the Family Canada

All rights reserved. International copyright secured.
Printed in Canada. No material in this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without the prior written consent of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada.

permissions/syndication

Institute of Marriage and Family Canada
130 Albert, Suite 2001
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4

IMFC Review is published semi-annually
ISSN 1715-5711

subscription info

www.imfcana.org

IMFC Review
130 Albert St. Suite 2001
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4
tel. 613.565.3832
fax. 613.565.3803
toll free. 1.866.373.IMFC (4632)
email. info@imfcana.org
www.imfcana.org

• CONTRIBUTORS



JENNIFER ROBACK MORSE writes about the family and the free society. Her first book, *Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work*, shows why the family is the necessary building block for a free society and why so many modern attempted substitutes for the family do not work. Her second book, *Smart Sex: Finding Life-Long Love in a Hook-Up World*, exposes the sexual revolution's fraudulent promise of freedom. Dr. Morse served as a Research Fellow for Stanford University's Hoover Institution from 1997-2005. She received her Ph.D. in economics from the University of Rochester in 1980 and spent a postdoctoral year at the University of Chicago during 1979-80. She taught economics at Yale University and George Mason University for 15 years. Her public policy and scholarly articles have appeared in *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Reason*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Journal of Political Economy*, *Economic Inquiry*, the *Journal of Economic History*, the *University of Chicago Law Review*, and the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, among numerous other publications.

ANDREA MROZEK is Manager of Research and Communications at the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. Prior to joining the Institute she was associate editor at *The Western Standard*, an independent news

magazine in Calgary. She has also worked on education and health policy at The Fraser Institute, where she co-authored "Let the Funding Follow the Children: A Solution for Special Education in Ontario." Her prior experience includes time at *Toronto Life* magazine and two political journals in Prague, Czech Republic, as well as corporate communications for a retirement and benefits consulting company in Toronto. She completed her Masters degree in History at the University of Toronto.

CAROLINE TAPP-MCDOUGALL is the publisher of *Canada's Family Guide to Home Health Care and Wellness, Solutions*, and the author of *The Complete Canadian Eldercare Guide*. A complimentary copy of *Solutions* magazine is available on request by e-mailing editorial@bcsgroup.com.

PETER JON MITCHELL is Research Analyst at the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. A former youth worker and speaker, Peter Jon has been involved with several youth focused non-profit organizations. Beyond his interest in youth issues, he has studied culture, society and public policy issues at the Focus on the Family Institute in Colorado. In addition to his academic background in history and political science, as well as a gradu-

ate degree in theology, Peter Jon is currently completing an advanced Masters degree.

KATE FRAHER is a researcher at the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. She is a past graduate of Trinity Western University's Laurentian Leadership program in Ottawa, where she also completed an internship at the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. She is finishing a degree in political science from Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia.

DAVE QUIST is the Executive Director of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. He has held various positions with Members of Parliament, and was a candidate in the 2004 federal election. He has had many years of experience in municipal administration, including the managing and administration of leisure pools, arenas, senior's centres, art galleries and museums. Dave has been interviewed for many local and national media outlets including the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, CBC radio "The House", "The New 980 (Montreal)", "Mike Duffy Live", CTV national news and *The New VI* (Victoria, BC). Dave has a Bachelor of Science from the University of Oregon and a Master of Public Administration from Queen's University in Kingston, ON.

TODDLER THINK TANK TAKES OTTAWA BY STORM

BY IMFC STAFF

- + The IMFC turned one on February 16, 2007. Since then, we've made an impact in different ways on the political climate in Canada – and even abroad. We've received requests from as far away as Spain and England about the Family Index – our compilation of thousands of social science studies found at www.familyindex.net.
- + In **Fall 2006, Dr. Kelly Schwartz, IMFC Research Fellow, began work on a national survey of families** (parents and children) that will begin collecting data in June 2007. The *Canadian Family Strengths Project* will ask over 500 families to respond to an online questionnaire on areas of family development including communication, cohesion and flexibility. The results will be a profile of Canadian family strengths that will inform both social policy and family development initiatives in the future.
- + **Starting off 2007 in sunny climes, Andrea Mrozek spoke at sea** about the state of the Canadian family, and discussed Bill C-303, the national daycare plan, on the *Western Standard* annual cruise. Panels included David Frum, Lorne Gunter and John O'Sullivan among others, as well as about 150 cruise participants.
- + In late February, **Andrea spoke to a group of about 30 University of Toronto students**, mostly young women, at the Current Affairs Exchange Forum. The topic was "Women in the media," and a version of the talk can be read in this issue of the *Review*.
- + On March 29, **Dave Quist testified before the Justice Committee about Bill C-22**, a bill to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16. Dave highlighted how and why increasing the age of consent protects our children from sexual predators.
- + Also in March, **Andrea traveled to Vancouver through the Liberty Fund**, an American foundation "devoted to the study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals." Nothing is more integral to freedom than the strength of the family.
- + **Dave spoke on April 20 to the Rideau Valley Home Educators' Association** – a group of over 100 home-schooling parents about the importance of getting involved in public life.
- + **On April 25 and 26, Dr. Chris Kahlenborn came to Ottawa** to discuss his Mayo Clinic article showing a link between oral contraceptives ("the Pill") and breast cancer. Pat Davidson, Member of Parliament for Sarnia-Lambton, hosted our presence on the Hill, for which we are very thankful. The event attracted about 40 attendees from the Senate, the House, the general public and the media.
- + Andrea also published **op-eds in the *Calgary Herald*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *National Post***, on topics such as income splitting and abortion.
- + And speaking of abortion, **Andrea introduced the IMFC and the work we are doing on "life" policy to the Parliamentary Pro-life Caucus (PPLC)**, a non-partisan caucus meeting dedicated to discussing life issues, on April 25. She subsequently provided research about sex-selection abortion and the links to violence against women for the PPLC press conference in conjunction with the annual March for Life in Ottawa.

- + On April 26, **Peter Jon Mitchell and Andrea spoke to a group of high school students** at the Laurentian Leadership Centre – a branch of Trinity Western University – about the cooperation between church and state and the work of Christians in politics and public life.
- + **Dave testified again on May 3, this time before Human Resources and Social Development about Bill C-303**, an NDP private member's bill, which would nationalize child care across the country.
- + And between May 11-13, **Dave traveled to Warsaw, Poland, to represent the IMFC at the fourth World Congress of Family**.
- + In addition to this, we publish our eReview on current events every two weeks. See www.imfcandada.org for more info.

We remain very grateful to our supporters for making this work possible. Please see www.imfcandada.org for more information about our activities.



Peter John Mitchell, MP Pat Davidson, Christina Bulgin, Dr. Chris Kahlenborn, Andrea Mrozek, Kate Fraher



Dr. Chris Kahlenborn presents his research

● RESEARCH ROUNDUP

REPORT OF THE APA TASK FORCE ON THE SEXUALIZATION OF GIRLS

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (2007). TASK FORCE ON THE SEXUALIZATION OF GIRLS. WASHINGTON, D.C. RETRIEVED FROM WWW.APA.ORG/PII/WPOI/SEXUALIZATION.HTML

"[W]omen and girls are more likely than men and boys to be objectified and sexualized in a variety of media outlets (including television, magazines, sports media, and music videos), in advertising and in several products that are marketed to children." This won't come as a surprise, but now we have evidence of a link between this and body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, impaired cognitive functioning, eating disorders, low self-esteem and depression in teenage girls. The APA concludes that among girls and women, "[s]elf-objectification has been shown to diminish cognitive ability and to cause shame. This cognitive diminishment, as well as the belief that physical appearance rather than academic or extracurricular achievement is the best path to power and acceptance, may influence girls' achievement levels and opportunities later in life."

Their recommendations include teaching media literacy in school, providing access to extracurricular activities, which "encourage girls to focus on body competence instead of body appearance," and comprehensive sexuality education which includes information on "the importance of delaying intercourse initiation for young people." At home, families can watch television together, participate in religious activities and undertake activism to protest against the pressure of sexualization – girls need positive media alternatives. Finally, research should be specific to girls, not just women, when we consider the reach of our hypersexualized culture. ☐

R-RATED MOVIES, BEDROOM TELEVISIONS, AND INITIATION OF SMOKING BY WHITE AND BLACK ADOLESCENTS

JACKSON, C., BROWN, J.D., L'ENGLE, K.L. (MARCH 2007). ARCHIVES OF PEDIATRICS & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE VOL. 161, NO. 3. AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION. RETRIEVED FROM [HTTP://IARCHPEDI.AMA-ASSN.ORG/CGI/CONTENT/FULL/161/3/260](http://IARCHPEDI.AMA-ASSN.ORG/CGI/CONTENT/FULL/161/3/260)

This study of 12-14 year-olds found that white adolescents who watched R-rated movies had a "significantly greater likelihood of smoking initiation" after a two-year follow-up assessment. White teens who had a high exposure to R-rated movies were almost seven times more likely to start smoking when compared to

their peers with low exposure. The study lists figures from other studies which show that smoking was portrayed in 100 per cent of movies rated R, and in 90 per cent of movies rated PG or PG-13 in 2002. The study calls for more research on the effects of this type of media on children's attitudes and behaviour. White teens who had a television in their bedroom were shown to have an increased likelihood of smoking initiation at follow-up and both black and white teens who reported low parental engagement or at least one friend who smoked, were more likely to start smoking.

In conclusion, the report states "the Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents prevent children from viewing movies intended for mature audiences and keep televisions out of children's bedrooms." ☐

DOES WHO YOU MARRY MATTER FOR YOUR HEALTH? INFLUENCE OF PATIENTS' AND SPOUSES' PERSONALITY ON THEIR PARTNERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING FOLLOWING CORONARY ARTERY BYPASS SURGERY

RUIZ, J.M., MATTHEWS, K.A., SCHEIER, M.F., SCHULZ, R. (2006). JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY VOL. 91, NO. 2. AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

This study sought to determine whether the personalities of husbands and wives before a husband's coronary artery bypass surgery (CABS) influenced the couple's psychological well-being after surgery. The study tracked 111 male patients and their wives. At the outset, couples were tested individually for levels of neuroticism, optimism, depressive symptoms, and perceived marital satisfaction. Researchers assessed couples' psychological well-being 18 months after the surgery was completed and found that caregiving wives who exhibited higher levels of neuroticism before surgery had more depressed husbands. And in much the same way, patients who exhibited higher levels of neuroticism before surgery had caregivers who exhibited more depressed symptoms after surgery. Low optimism and high depressive symptoms before



surgery made caregiving harder for wives, but overall, relationship satisfaction before surgery operated as a moderator for these effects. The researchers conclude, "[t]hese results suggest that partners' personality traits are important determinants of both patients' and their caregiving spouses' well-being." ☐

RISK FACTORS FOR FIRST TRIMESTER MISCARRIAGE – RESULTS FROM A UK-POPULATION-BASED CASE-CONTROL STUDY

MACONOCHE, N., DOYLE, P., PRIOR S., SIMMONS, R. (FEBRUARY 2007). BJOG: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY. LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE.

This study questioned 603 women who suffered a first trimester miscarriage during their last pregnancy. Researchers looked for biological, behavioural and lifestyle risk factors that may be associated with miscarriage. The study found that eating fresh fruits and vegetables daily, vitamin consumption, a healthy body weight, and feeling happy and relaxed are associated with a reduced risk of miscarriage. An increased risk of miscarriage was associated with the termination of a prior pregnancy (abortion), stress or traumatic events during pregnancy, change of partner and weight problems (either under or overweight) prior to pregnancy. The report concludes the increased risks associated with the characteristics above are "noteworthy" and that further work should be done "to confirm these findings in other study populations." ☐

IS SEX MAKING STUDENTS SICK?

AS DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND EVEN SUICIDE BECOME MORE COMMONPLACE ON CAMPUS, EVERYONE IS ASKING: WHAT IS GOING ON WITH KIDS?

by Kate Fraher



DR. MIRIAM GROSSMAN IS A CAMPUS PSYCHIATRIST AT UCLA. SHE ATTENDED NEW YORK UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL AND DID HER RESIDENCY IN PSYCHIATRY THROUGH CORNELL UNIVERSITY. HER BOOK, **UNPROTECTED: A CAMPUS PSYCHIATRIST REVEALS HOW POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN HER PROFESSION ENDANGERS EVERY STUDENT**, IS BEING RE-RELEASED WITH HER NAME ON IT. INITIALLY WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY, FOR FEAR OF PROFESSIONAL FALLOUT, DR. GROSSMAN HAS SINCE REVEALED HER IDENTITY – AND STRESSES SHE IS CRITICAL OF INSTITUTIONAL, POLITICALLY-CORRECT ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND SAFE SEX; WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ACKNOWLEDGING THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION OF HER COLLEAGUES IN STUDENT HEALTH AND COUNSELLING.

IMFC: From your experience as an on-campus psychiatrist, what sorts of issues are young people struggling with most these days?

MIRIAM GROSSMAN: Depression and anxiety are the most common diagnoses. The most common sorts of problems are people complaining of symptoms of anxiety, which would consist of excessive worrying, inability to fall asleep at night, worrying about either academics, relationships, the future or something that has happened, and depression as well – people who have some feeling of loss, frustration, sadness, for whatever reason. Everyone is asking – educators, parents – what is going on with kids? Why are so many of them depressed and even suicidal? Why are there up to 1,100 completed suicides a year on our campuses? Most commonly the answer given is college kids are overwhelmed by the following things: Stress from academic and extracurricular responsibilities, family problems, finances and health issues. They may be concerned about things going on in politics and society, for example, for a while the job market was not good, then there are substance-abuse issues, parental expectations. I'm not questioning any of that and I'm agreeing those are all contributing issues. But I think it's a mistake to neglect the effects on our students of the culture of casual sexual behaviour and hooking-up and of the epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases and abortion.

IMFC: In your book you state that health education as it stands now is 'ideology-driven.' What does this ideology look like?

MG: Part of that ideology says that there is such a thing as casual sexual behaviour without consequences: That you can basically have the lifestyle of *Friends* and *Sex in the City* and not pay dues. I'm arguing that we are not doing a favour to our young people, especially to our young women, by giving them that impression. I have had many patients who followed the guidelines – the guidelines being to use condoms, get tested frequently, limit your partners – and they still have the very difficult experiences of a diagnosis of herpes or HPV or an unwanted pregnancy, not to mention the emotional fallout from some of these casual relationships. We're not treating these health issues the same way that we treat other health issues, such as cigarettes or alcohol. We do that in a very direct and no-nonsense kind of way. We make it clear that we have expectations that people are going to make smart decisions. We assume that young people are capable of self-control and delayed gratification but when it comes to sexual health, we have another standard.

IMFC: Do you think promiscuity among young women or what some refer to as the 'hook-up' culture is damaging?

MG: I absolutely think it's damaging. I think that it's damaging for both men and women but in particular for women. In the book I provide different stories of patients that came to me. One young woman came down with depressive symptoms – was often crying and isolating herself in her room and couldn't figure out what that was all about. The psychologist she saw previous to seeing

me also couldn't pinpoint anything. To make a long story short, this young woman had entered into a "friends with benefits" relationship and she really liked the young man. She wanted to do other things with him. She wanted to go out and have dinner and go to the movies but he wouldn't do that because that was too much of a relationship for him. She just hadn't put the whole thing together and understood that she was attached to him emotionally and she

WHEN I AM ACCUSED OF BEING ANTI-FEMALE OR BEING A PRUDE OR LIMITING PEOPLE'S LIFESTYLES, WHAT I ANSWER IS THIS: WHO'S REALLY LOOKING OUT FOR WOMEN HERE? AND WHO HAS A SOCIAL AGENDA?

was suffering as a result of his complete lack of interest in spending time with her. . . . More importantly, what young women need to know in college is that oxytocin [a hormone] is released during sexual behaviour. This does strongly suggest that sexual behaviour can promote feelings of attachment – emotional attachment – as well as trust. There were other studies showing that oxytocin is related to trusting one's partner. These are things that people should be educated about, along with all the education about contraceptives and birth control and the availability of abortion.

IMFC: Is the hook-up culture part of mainstream campus culture?

MG: Oh, absolutely, it seems to be. The research is showing that between 40 and 80 per cent of students have participated in a hook-up, defined as an unplanned sexual encounter between two people who have no plans to see each other again.

IMFC: What can parents do to make sure that their kids are "protected," in the sense that you mean, by the time they reach university age?

MG: The first thing the parents can do is educate themselves. It is very different [today] than when they were in college and dating or hanging out. At that time, of course, there was the one night stand and there was promiscuity but these were [behaviours seen in] a minority of people. In addition, at that time you didn't have a promotion of casual sex by universities. For example, parents should go to www.goaskalice.com. It's Columbia University's health education website. . . . Universities are advising students on such behaviours as threesomes and foursomes and clubs where this sort of thing is going on. . . . They also discuss subjects such as sexual sadism and masochism and go into details of how to find others that are interested in that sort of behaviour. . . . I don't come from a moral point of view. I'm arguing that from a health point of view, it's simply irresponsible to encourage multiple partners when we know that's what is fuelling the epidemic. Parents should read my

book. They can also read the book *Unhooked* by Laura Sessions Stepp. Hopefully the relationship is open and honest enough that parents can say to students after they've arrived on campus: How is it going? Have you found a group of friends? Tell me about them. Are you comfortable with them? Do they make good choices? Try and slowly get into these areas that have to do with risky sexual behaviour.

IMFC: Limiting access to sex, or even the mere suggestion that young people limit the sex they have is often criticized as either limiting lifestyle choices or clamping down on women's rights. How would you respond to either of these criticisms?

MG: Again, I look at it as a health issue. And I believe that genuine feminism protects women and girls. We have our current disaster of tens of millions of people with sexually transmitted diseases – these are conditions that can affect finding a spouse, conceiving a child and carrying a pregnancy to term. This is to say nothing of the fact that this lifestyle of multiple casual partners distracts women and men from what they seem to really want. A poll done of freshman at four-year colleges reported in the January issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* asked what their most important goals are. The top goal, 75.5 per cent of freshmen said, was to raise a family. When I am accused of being anti-female, being a prude or limiting



people's lifestyles, what I answer is this: Who's really looking out for women here? And who has a social agenda? Women and men are telling us that their most important life goal is to raise a family. . . . Exactly how is this lifestyle advancing or facilitating the hopes and dreams of our young women and men in college? To the contrary, the hooking-up culture and the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases and emotional problems that result are only going to, if anything, become obstacles on their path to achieve their dream. ✍️

MATERNAL CARES

WHAT SCIENCE IS TEACHING US ABOUT THE NATURE OF NURTURING OUR YOUNG

by Peter Jon Mitchell



When Dr. Michael Meaney enters his research laboratory in Montreal, it's to mixed reviews. Some freeze and panic, others stand at attention but then resume eating their lunches, without a care, or even so much as a "hello." We're talking about rats, here. With people, the reviews are pretty much unanimously positive. Dr. Meaney, the McGill professor at the department of Psychiatry, Neurology and Neurosurgery, is commanding much attention these days – he has twice received invitations to confer with the Dalai Lama. But back in the lab, it's the rats he is concerned with; he's

been working with them for almost two decades. And when he claps his hands, all the rats freeze at the sound as they should, but some, the better adjusted ones, are soon able to return to eating, or doing whatever it is rats do, realizing that the scientist poses no threat. Others – those poor vermin who are poorly adjusted – remain immobilized for upward of 10 minutes.¹ Why the different reactions?

The answer stems from a new twist on a very old debate. You might recall the nature-versus-nurture discourse from your high-school days. Teacher after teacher

for years has posed the same question: Is who we are and how we behave a function of our biology determined by our genes, or a result of our environment and how we've been socialized? Forget what you thought you knew. The old terms, and the debate itself, are changing.

The reason for the change? The human genome project – started in 1990 and finally completed in 2003 – provided new insights into how the body develops and behaves by charting the sequence and function of particular genes. In so doing, science left the nature-versus-nurture squabble and shifted to an emphasis on nature *and* nurture; how environmental factors interact with our biology. It is a question of interplay, and the new discoveries are incredible. Emerging to the forefront is the study of epigenetics: How physical and social environments affect gene expression without altering the DNA structure. In short, how nurture can affect nature; how environment can change a person's biology. High-school students may soon be jotting down a whole new set of notes.

You are more than what you eat

Researchers like Moshe Szyf, pharmacology professor also at McGill University, have high hopes for what epigenetics might mean for curing or preventing fatal diseases. His research examines how environmental factors such as toxins or even the foods we eat may turn genes linked to diseases like cancer on or off. The potential is great: Scientists could one day be able to reverse the onset of disease by controlling the mechanism which activates particular genes.²

But it's not just what we eat or ingest that matters. Along with Szyf, researchers like Meaney and Toronto physiology professor Stephen Matthews, are discovering that our life experiences can influence our genes. Our quality of family life may influence our vulnerability to obesity, heart disease and other illnesses later in life.² In particular, researchers have been examining how a mother's care determines processes in the brains of an infant that affect outcomes in the child's life, and could even impact the physiology of the next generation. In short, the science is showing that the environments and life occurrences of our grandparents might very well have programmed aspects of our own development.

Canadians are leaders in the epigenetic field; critical epigenetic research and its influence on maternal care is being conducted in our own backyard. Canadians should be proud – and compelled to examine the implications for health and welfare and public policy, too. The physical and emotional health of women is critical to the healthy development of children. Likewise, the quality of care children receive in the very early stages of life establishes health outcomes later in life. The scientists doing the research, like Meaney, are saying that the mother-child relationship requires protection and promotion. Canadian policy makers need to tune in and

consider the findings that these fine Canadian academics are bringing to light on the world stage, knowing precisely what the science does – and does not – say.

It all starts in the womb

How a mother reacts to stressors in her immediate environment impacts the physiological development of her child even before offspring leave the womb.⁴ Enter University of Toronto physiology professor Stephen Matthews, his small army of graduate students and a legion of guinea pigs. Dr. Matthews' focus? Examining how the foetal environment programs aspects of the brain to secrete chemicals that influence gene expression

Specifically, Matthews and his team of researchers are interested in the region of the brain called the hypothalamus, pituitary gland and adrenal cortex – or HPA axis – which influences stress responses and affects the function of the digestive and immune systems.⁵ Matthews monitors a series of reactions in the HPA axis that determine a guinea pig's reaction to stress, which is

THE SCIENTISTS DOING THE RESEARCH ARE SAYING THAT THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES PROTECTION AND PROMOTION

similar to the response a human would have. The hypothalamus sends messages to the anterior pituitary gland to secrete adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). This important hormone, in turn, stimulates the adrenal cortex to secrete the hormone cortisol. Often referred to as a stress hormone, cortisol assists the body in gathering energy to cope with stress.⁶ Measuring levels of cortisol in people (or the rodent equivalent, called corticosterone) allows researchers to gauge the severity of the body's reaction to environmental stressors

Matthews' studies examine the manner in which maternal stress programs HPA function and the resulting behaviour of the guinea pig pups by observing post-natal outcomes. In one of his experiments, female guinea pigs in the late stages of pregnancy were exposed to moderate levels of stress induced by a strobe light – the strobe is proven to cause the animals stress. The stressed guinea pigs produced offspring who were significantly underweight, and had increased stress hormone levels. These results indicate that those young whose moms were moderately stressed during certain periods of their pregnancy demonstrated physiological differences, like being underweight, as compared with the young of mothers who were not exposed to stress.⁷

The study also suggests that raised hormone levels in pregnant animals influence the elevation of stress hormones in offspring. In humans, increased cortisol levels have been found in patients with bipolar disorder. Also,

HPA axis disorders are present in up to 30 per cent of patients with depression.⁸ It's plausible that prenatal maternal stress may affect these types of diseases.

Another Matthews study involved exposing pregnant rats to purely psychological stressors such as strobe lights, forced foraging for food and wet bedding. These stressors produced raised stress hormones in the mother rats, things like changes in maternal behaviour within the first eight days of lactation.⁹ For example, the stressed-out mothers were less attentive to their young. The alteration in maternal behaviour was a significant result. Additional studies of rat populations have the same result, showing that the offspring's development is influenced by mothering behaviours.

Matthews' studies are fascinating for several reasons. Maternal stress not only causes physiological changes within mothers as stress hormones are released, but this response results in physiological expression in the offspring. Animals in stressful environments during the late stages of pregnancy breed anxious offspring. The implications of this are just beginning to be grasped – and advocates of very different stripes are putting the information to use. For example, in March 2007, a study advocating for non-parental, state-funded daycare cited epigenetic research in describing how institutional early learning is important before children get to kindergarten.¹⁰ The scientists themselves cautiously avoid such prognostications in the public-policy arena.

Meaney and mother rats in Montreal

Back at McGill, Dr. Michael Meaney examines how maternal care affects stress responses and even the maternal behaviour of female offspring. Meaney, in addition to his distinguished position in the department of Psychiatry and Neurology and Neurosurgery at McGill, serves as the director of the Program for the Study of Behaviour, Genes and Environment. He is one of the recognizable faces of epigenetic research in Canada, particularly in the area of maternal care. A highly-sought speaker internationally, Meaney was among the very first researchers to connect impact of maternal care on the expression of genes that regulate how the body reacts to stress.¹¹

Dr. Stephen Matthews at the University of Toronto knows guinea pigs, Meaney, however, has done much of his work with rat populations. He noted in a 2001 journal article that nearly 40 years earlier, researchers who studied rats had unveiled evidence suggesting environmental events could alter effects not only on offspring but on the subsequent generation as well.¹² Even though the evidence for the trans-generational transfer of environmental-influenced effects was published in the well-known journal *Nature*, the results garnered little additional interest.

Years later, Meaney and his team picked up on the research with studies identifying maternal behaviour as a mediator of trans-generational effects.¹³ His new work hinged on two critical assumptions. First, that the

body's chemical response to stress helps it to cope, but prolonged activation can actually cause harm, leading to greater susceptibility to disease;¹⁴ the second that early environmental factors in a rat's life could influence how it reacts to stress throughout life.¹⁵

Lifelong chemistry

In the first assumption, the series of HPA axis reactions that produce cortisol is the natural and healthy way for the body to cope with stress. Meaney asserted that a problem arises when prolonged exposure to stress causes continued production of cortisol, much like Matthews showed with his guinea pigs. The chemical reaction directs energy away from the synthesis of proteins including those essential to the immune system. This weakens the ability of the immune system to fight disease, leaving the body more susceptible to poor health.¹⁶ Long-term exposure to stress can lead to insulin resistance and heart disease as well as memory and learning problems.¹⁷

In the second assumption, that early environmental factors could have lifelong effects, his work focused on how particular aspects of maternal care can regulate the process of cortisol production in offspring.

With his rat pack, Meaney set out to study the effect of stress on maternal behaviour and how quality of mother care influences their little ones. Mother rats (called dams) engage baby rats (called pups) in nesting behaviours shortly after birth that involve an arched-backed nursing position and licking and grooming. Meaney and his team observed dam and pup interaction over the first week postpartum. He noted which dams favoured lots of licking and grooming and which did not.¹⁸ Observing the pups through to adulthood, Meaney examined the adult offspring of high licking and grooming mothers and compared them with the low licked and groomed offspring. He discovered that high licked and groomed offspring had reduced ACTH and corticosterone (stress hormone) levels.¹⁹ The difference in cortisol levels accounts for the varied reactions of the rats when Meaney approaches the cage clapping his hands.

But what is actually transpiring in the brains of rats that causes them to react so differently? The answer is known as "methylation" to scientists like Meaney. A quartet of atoms called methyl group attach to a gene at a certain point, controlling the way the gene is expressed. Methylation patterns are not present in some regions of the rat genome until after birth. The first week of a rat's life is critical as methylation patterns begin, and the licking and grooming stimulates the development of these patterns. This accounts for the different reactions between high and low licked offspring.²⁰ In a sense, genes are turning on and off because of the level of maternal care. The methylation patterns are responsible for "flipping the switch" on

the genes that control cortisol production.

Meaney continued to observe the behaviour of the pups as they grew and reproduced. He and his team found that the fearful, low licked rats produced “stress-reactive offspring,” in other words, stressed-out rats begot more stressed-out rats.²¹ The high licked rats demonstrated high licking and grooming behaviour with their own offspring and the maternal behaviour is transmitted via gene expression from generation to generation.²²

This observation sparked further inquiry: Meaney wondered how this inheritance could work. So he subjected the second and third generations to “cross-fostering.” Meaney switched the pups to different mothers within the first twelve hours after birth. He put some of the pups who had low licking mothers with high licking and grooming mothers and vice versa. Meaney discovered that the methylation patterns in the pups reflected the adopted parents in both cases.²³ Meaney reported, “Individual differences in fearfulness or maternal behaviour mapped onto those of the rearing mother rather than the biological mother.”²⁴

The results of the experiment suggest that environmental events occurring early in life can be transmitted to the next generation, however good maternal care – even adoptive maternal care – can reverse the effects of poor maternal care.²⁵

Separation anxiety

Pups separated from their mothers for substantial periods of time, even when given all the comforts the creatures need, showed similar results to those who received little licking and grooming. “Predictably,” the researcher writes, “the maternal separation animals were highly fearful in behavioural tests of novelty.”²⁶ Fortunately, as with the low licked pups, the research shows that these effects can be reversed as the cross-fostering demonstrates. When separated pups are stroked with a brush simulating maternal licking and grooming, the physiological process is reversed.²⁷ The studies suggest that some level of compensation occurs through environmental enrichment later in life which could offset the effects of earlier trauma.²⁸

When Meaney’s contributions are applied to previous rodent research, important conclusions can be drawn. Previous research demonstrates that maternal care in the rat world stimulates the release of growth hormones. The work of the McGill professor confirms that maternal care has an immediate impact on HPA activity in infant rats with particular care in regulating stress hormones. The outcomes from rodent studies suggest that maternal licking and grooming promote growth and development. Previous studies have shown that offspring of high licking and grooming mothers demonstrate superior cognitive development in spatial

learning and object recognition.²⁹

The research also suggests that environmental adversity plays an important role in increasing stress and anxiety in mother rats which dictates the quality of maternal care. Lower-quality maternal care leads to higher stress hormones in offspring who develop into high-anxiety, low-quality maternal care mothers.³⁰

Maternal cares: from rats to humans

Meaney’s rats may help researchers understand findings about maternal care among humans. Seemingly obvious studies have demonstrated that depressed mothers are less positive towards their babies. Another study found that highly anxious mothers were more likely to have shy and timid children. A study in 2000 linked results of parental bonding tests to HPA responses to stress.³¹ Meaney’s results lend an epigenetic understanding to these results.

The Montreal-based researcher also says that high levels of stress hormones, while unhealthy in the long run, might serve a positive short-term purpose in some cases. He argues that children often inherit the previous generation’s environment. Higher stress hormones might be an adaptive approach needed for survival.³² For example, behaviour studies have demonstrated that in high-crime neighbourhoods, timid boys are less likely to get in trouble.³³ In this case, higher stress hormones may be desirable for survival.

Dr. Meaney and Dr. Matthews have looked beyond the rodent community for their current research project. The two men are engaged in the Maternal Adversity Vulnerability and Neurodevelopment (MAVAN)

HELPING MOTHERS COPE IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE: HOW CAN PROGRAMS REACH THOSE WHO REALLY NEED IT? WHAT LEVEL OF SUPPORT IS REQUIRED? HOW INVOLVED DOES THE STATE NEED TO BE?

study. The \$4 million multi-year study follows mothers who are depressed from pre-birth through the first years of the child’s life. Meaney, Matthews and their colleagues tested the infants for 22 genes that may affect behaviour and be linked to learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. The researchers are hoping to observe how depression in mothers influences the expression of their children’s genes. They will test the children’s cortisol levels, conduct brain scans for physical development and observe cognitive and social development. The research team has offered the mothers treatment but previous studies suggest that one-third of participants will not accept it.³⁴ The MAVAN study is ongoing.

Implications for public policy

What does it all mean? For Meaney his tests show that good maternal care is really important. “Together, the results of these studies suggest that the behaviour of a mother toward her offspring can ‘program’ behavioural neuroendocrine responses to stress in adulthood.”³⁵ In short, maternal care programs gene expression in the part of the brain that regulates reactions to stress. This influences the vulnerability or resistance to stress-induced illness in adulthood.³⁶ For advocates of early-learning and child-care programs, the results demonstrate a need for accessible, quality child-care programs in the highly contentious debate over national daycare in Canada. For those who favour parental care the results lend meaning to their work – time spent with infants in the days and weeks after birth may affect their whole lives.

Meaney maintains his focus, saying that it is important to make sure mothers are cared for themselves. “Keeping moms happy should be a priority,” says Meaney.³⁷ While it might sound like an advertisement for a greeting card company, happy and healthy mothers are critical. Pregnant mothers and their children both benefit when moms are healthy. One practical implication is for families to consider ways to reduce maternal stress.

Meaney himself advocates for policies that support moms, children and families. Meaney says poverty and mental illness – grave stresses on moms – are bad for the healthy development of children. “Women’s health is critical. The single most important factor determining the quality of mother-offspring interactions is the mental and physical health of the mother. This is equally true for rats, monkeys and humans.”³⁸ Public policy that helps moms might include generous maternity leave or community resources – such as visits from the public-health nurse. One study published in 1998 followed the children of low-income mothers who were visited by a public-health nurse throughout pregnancy and the first two years of the child’s life. As adolescents these children were less likely to run away, be arrested or engage in cigarette and alcohol use than their peers.³⁹

Helping mothers cope in stressful situations is easier said than done: How can programs reach those who really need it? What level of support is required? How involved does the state need to be? But this type of research – epigenetics – already helps with the problem of providing an awareness of the importance of good maternal care, and the importance of mothers in general for healthy kids and for intergenerational connections.

Epigenetic research confirms we cannot divorce social nurturing from biological nature and that valuing motherhood and promoting women’s health today will result in a healthier society tomorrow. Dr. Matthews and Dr. Meaney will continue to spook small animals in the name of research – and families will reap the benefits. But while the research is new, exciting and engages new frontiers in genetic research – sometimes it seems

like the results are astounding only in their simplicity – reminding us of something we knew all along. Mothers matter. Their health matters. And how they interact with their babies matters. But if it takes a host of rats and guinea pigs to help us remember the point, then the more the merrier.

endnotes

- 1 McIlroy, A. (2004, April 5) Gene therapy... the natural way. *Globe and Mail*. P. A4. Retrieved February 15, 2007 from <http://evalu8.org/staticpage?page=review&siteid=7306>
- 2 McDevitt, N. (2006, May 4) McGill blazes epigenetic trail freeing ourselves from genetic destiny. *McGill Reporter* Retrieved January 8, 2007 from <http://www.mcgill.ca/reporter/38/16/genes/>
- 3 Meaney, M. Szyf, M. (2005, September) Maternal care as a model for experience-dependent chromatin plasticity? *Trends in Neurosciences* VOL.28 NO.9. P. 456.
- 4 Harper, L. (2005) Epigenetic inheritance and the intergenerational transfer of experience *Psychological Bulletin* VOL.131 NO.3. P.340.
- 5 Professor Stephen Matthews' Laboratory. Retrieved from <http://www.utoronto.ca/DOHAD/>
- 6 Kalat, J. (2001) *Biological Psychology* (7th ED.) Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson Learning. P.344.
- 7 Kapoor, A., Matthews, S.G. (2005, August) Short periods of prenatal stress affect growth, behaviour and hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis activity in male guinea pig offspring. *Journal of Physiology* 566. P.967.
- 8 *Ibid.*, P. 975.
- 9 Leonhardt, M., Matthews, S.G. (2007, January) Psychological stressors as a model of maternal adversity: Diurnal modulation of corticosterone responses and changes in maternal behavior. *Hormones and Behavior* VOL.51 NO. 1.PP.77-88.
- 10 See McCain, M., Mustard, J.F., Shanker, S. (2007, March) *Early years study 2: Putting science into action*. Toronto: Council for Early Child Development. [http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/setup.nsf/\(ActiveFiles\)/EarlyYears2/\\$file/48590_Early_Years_2.pdf](http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/setup.nsf/(ActiveFiles)/EarlyYears2/$file/48590_Early_Years_2.pdf)
- 11 See Michael Meaney's Profile at <http://www.douglasrecherche.qc.ca/profiles/details.asp?l=e&id=101>
- 12 Meaney, M. (2001) Maternal care, gene expression, and the transmission of individual differences in stress reactivity across generations. *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 24. P.1173.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 1173.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 1163.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 1162.
- 16 Kalat, *Biological Psychology*, 346.
- 17 Meaney, Maternal care, gene expression, 1163.
- 18 High and low licking mothers were determined by observing maternal behaviour and establishing a group mean standard. Therefore, it should be noted that high and low licking and grooming mothers were not two distinct populations but a representative of two ends of a continuum. For further explanation see the online Supplementary Methods of Weaver, L., Cervoni, N., Champagne, F. et al (2004, August) Epigenetic programming by maternal behaviour. *Nature Neuroscience* VOL.7 NO.8 available at <http://www.nature.com/neuro/journal/v7/n8/extref/n1276-S1.pdf>
- 19 Meaney and Szyf, Maternal care as a model, 456-457.
- 20 Blakeslee, S. (2003, October 7) A pregnant mother's diet may turn the genes around. *New York Times*. P. D1.
- 21 Meaney, Maternal care, gene expression, 1171.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Weaver, L., Cervoni, N., Champagne, F. et al (2004, August) Epigenetic programming by maternal behaviour. *Nature Neuroscience* VOL.7 NO.8. PP.848-849.
- 24 Meaney, Maternal care, gene expression, 1171.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 1172.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 1167.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 1175.
- 28 Francis, D., Diorio, J., Plotsky, P., Meaney, M. (2002, September 5) Environmental enrichment reverses the effects of maternal separation on stress reactivity. *Journal of Neuroscience* VOL.22 NO.18. P.7842.
- 29 Meaney, Maternal care, gene expression, 1175.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 1181.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 1170.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 1182.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 McIlroy, Gene therapy, A4.
- 35 Meaney, Maternal care, gene expression, 1170.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 1181
- 37 Spoil the mom and spare the child? (2006) *Douglas Research Centre* Retrieved March 23, 2007 from <http://www.douglas.qc.ca/news/details.asp?l=e&ty=a&id=202&yr=2006>
- 38 Warwick, W. (2005, October). Dr. Michael Meaney: More cuddles less stress. *Bulletin of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development* VOL.4 NO.2. P.2. Retrieved <http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/Page2Vol4-No2Oct05ANG.pdf>
- 39 Olds, D. as cited by Doob, A., Cesaroni, C. (2004). *Responding to Youth Crime in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. P.263.

FAMILY PLANNING

NEW TRENDS IN URBAN ARCHITECTURE ARE PUTTING SOCIAL PROBLEMS ON THE DRAWING BOARD. CAN WE HELP IMPOVERISHED NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGH BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE AND DESIGN?

by Peter Jon Mitchell



Regent Park, Toronto

Billed as Ontario's largest environmentally-friendly community, the plans for Seaton in North Pickering embrace a new housing trend. With ample green space and plenty of bike paths, Seaton boasts housing designs that prominently feature gardens and porches where designers traditionally erect garages. The idea is to create an interactive community where neighbours will leisurely converse while enjoying the green spaces and eco-resources of the planned suburb. Seaton will be friendly, green, and giant, accommodating 70 000 people.¹ Construction is supposed to start in five years.

Driving west on Highway 401 into the "Big Smoke," to the core of Toronto you'll find another planned community thought to be innovative in its day. Regent Park is Canada's largest public-housing project with over 7,000 residents. Built in the 1950s, Regent Park is showing its age and reflects the reality that 67 per cent of households live below the low-income cut-off (LICO). With disproportionately more children than the rest of Toronto, 56 per cent of families are headed by a lone parent.² Physically worn and socially troubled, Regent Park is undergoing a planned revitalization that began in February 2006, one residents hope will change the face of the community.

The minds behind the Seaton development and the Regent Park revitalization know that the physical space we occupy contributes to our quality of life. High-poverty neighbourhoods, like Regent Park, pose challenges for families: Children are more likely to grow up without two married parents than their middle-income counterparts. The question is: Can the physical revitalization and redesign of a neighbourhood strengthen families?

Families in poor urban neighbourhoods

Cities tend to be separated by income, creating economically- and socially-segregated neighbourhoods. This may place constraints on families and individuals.³ Poor neighbourhoods contribute to what American sociologists Anne Pebley and Sastry Narayan call the “intergenerational transmission of poverty.”⁴ As a result, children in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods stand to inherit greater risk of social and behavioural problems.

Canadian sociologist Don Kerr reported that in the late 1990s, 13.7 per cent of all children lived in single-mom homes but that 41 per cent of all children living below the LICO were in single-mother families.⁵ As is the case in Regent Park, higher numbers of single-mother families are located in poorer neighbourhoods. Kerr argues that single-mom homes are increasing among the economically disadvantaged.⁶ Conversely, statistics from the United States suggest that children from families with an income over \$75,000 are much more likely to live in a home with two parents.⁷

Fatherlessness begets further father absenteeism in low-income neighbourhoods where single-mother families are the norm. American author Kay Hymowitz, scholar at the Manhattan Institute, a New York-based think tank, suggests that young men living in impoverished conditions may desire to be responsible fathers but fail because they are immersed in a culture of fatherlessness.⁸ As few models of responsible fatherhood abound, young men in poverty struggle to understand their role. Hymowitz suggests that young women accept this reality, plunging themselves into what she calls the “teen mommy track.” She argues that this trend is so entrenched that in some neighbourhoods teens without children fear being pushed to the social margins of their peer group.⁹ A 2007 Statistics Canada report confirms that teen motherhood is a poor-neighbourhood trend in Canada. The study found that teen mothers who gave birth to a second or subsequent child were highly concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods.¹⁰

Children in low-income neighbourhoods face all

kinds of challenges – family instability and a lack of parental stability among them. Do bleak surroundings, under-resourced neighbourhoods with few stores, gardens, or pleasant places for children to play exacerbate the problem? Could revitalization improve a child’s outlook?

Urban family patterns

Some theorists suggest that physical environments and infrastructures can affect personal development and behaviour, particularly among children.¹¹ The physically downtrodden neighbourhood may indirectly affect children adversely, serving as a negative backdrop for development.¹²

A study in the *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* suggests that disadvantaged urban environments are highly stressful for inhabitants. The authors argue that perceptions of bad neighbourhood characteristics predict depressive symptoms.¹³

Academics Gilbert Gee and David Takeuchi argued in a 2004 paper that people living in areas with what they called greater “vehicle burden” had lower health status and greater depressive symptoms.¹⁴ Many urban revitalization projects strive to reduce traffic congestion and increase pedestrian accessibility.

Another study in the *Journal of Environmental Behaviour* reports that increased green spaces, another feature of revitalization, increased social interaction among seniors.¹⁵ With seniors at least, these integral design initiatives seem to support a healthier living environment.

The case for revitalization

The idea of nurturing a healthier living environment for families of all income levels is compelling. Governments and activists are pushing for the revitalization of existing communities, drawing in social

EVEN THE MOST ZEALOUS REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES, DONE IMPROPERLY, ARE DOOMED TO FAIL

and economic resources to help low-income families. For the last thirty years planning gurus have theorized about design and quality of life in urban centers. Rejecting sprawling suburbs, these planners have developed neighbourhoods featuring less traffic, increased green space, layouts that contribute to community interaction and of course artistic building design. As post-war public housing flourished and then deteriorated, the trendy new urban principles have been adopted in redesigning poverty-stricken

neighbourhoods.

While revitalization can take many forms, several principles are most commonly applied. These principles include:

- A variety of housing types that accommodate various family sizes and incomes.
- Mixed home ownership and subsidized housing such as rent geared to income units, creating economic diversity in the neighbourhood.
- Consideration for aesthetics in building design.

A CHURCH PARTNERED WITH A PIZZA CHAIN, WHICH EMPLOYED PARTICIPANTS FROM THE CHURCH'S DRUG AND ALCOHOL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

- Abundance of green space and parks as well as building designs that accommodate neighbourly interaction.
- A focus on lower traffic volume, greater pedestrian access and more available public transit.
- Mixed use, meaning residential, institutional (schools) and commercial business sharing the same spaces.

Rather than these neighbourhoods trapping people, the community becomes a source of pride and a resource for better living. Better designed neighbourhoods with mixed income levels are intentionally resourced to help families. These principles for revitalization are encapsulated in the design theory known as New Urbanism. A growing movement over the last several decades, New Urbanism emphasises the above principles with a focus on building more liveable and community-friendly designs. New Urbanism and its growing link to neighbourhood revitalization build on the idea that community environment greatly affects the well-being of residents.

Mixed income and ownership is the key

The foundational principle on which the success of revitalization is built is the encouragement of mixed-income neighbourhoods. From the mid-1970s to the late 1990s, Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program moved more than 7,100 families in the Chicago area out of segregated, poverty-stricken neighbourhoods. Studies showed that within these families parental employment went up and child outcomes improved dramatically.¹⁶ The study demonstrates that neighbourhoods have a profound impact on families.

Frequently the poor urban family's strategy is

simply "escape". Philip Oreopoulos, professor of economics at the University of Toronto, reported that households stay in high-poverty neighbourhoods in Canada for an average of 3.8 years before moving to less dense communities. The longer households live in what he calls high poverty, the longer they stay in poverty neighbourhoods.¹⁷ Harvard professor Xavier de Souza Briggs argues that neighbourhoods serve as traps, stepping stones or springboards for families struggling to escape poverty. Families succeed if they can move from low-resource, high-risk neighbourhoods to better resourced communities with fewer risks. He suggests that most often families move laterally, to similarly resourced neighbourhoods, and often fall back into trap neighbourhoods after escaping.¹⁸

With this in mind, the growing move to renew urban neighbourhoods embraces this understanding with the intent to move beyond helping individual families to helping many families by assisting the neighbourhood as a whole. Relocating to neighbourhoods where ownership was far more common meant relocation to where neighbourhood resources were abundant. While Gautreaux moved families into middle-income neighbourhoods, many proponents of urban renewal hope to attract middle-income families into low-income neighbourhoods if not into public-housing complexes. The benefit of mixed-income neighbourhoods provides pride of ownership, economic growth and improved resources. Several studies conclude that schools with mixed-income students often help boost the academic performance of lower-income students.¹⁹

Yet even the most zealous revitalization initiatives, done improperly, are doomed to fail. Many have been promoted by housing authorities who have sought to redesign and renew public housing and much money has been spent – the funds for these projects primarily flow from governments. Such is the case with the Hope VI grant project south of the border. The United States federal government has invested \$5.7 billion between 1993 and 2006 in revitalizing some of the most devastated public-housing properties across the country through the grant program.²⁰ The money was been used to redevelop public housing and invested in social programs for residents. Sadly, research by the Urban Institute evaluated several current Hope VI projects and found that employment rates²¹ remained unchanged as did the level of health issues.²²

Neither were the Hope VI initiatives very successful in attracting middle-income families with kids. A study in the *Journal of Urban Affairs* evaluated several types of Hope VI projects and reported that few families with kids moved in of their own volition.²³

NGOs pointing the way?

Perhaps the most successful organizations in revitalization have been not-for-profit groups who have encouraged neighbourhood transitions or the use of vouchers for lower-income people to move into the private market.

A 2005 study examined residents' attitudes on their economic, neighbourhood and housing situation five years after relocating out of public housing undergoing Hope VI redevelopment. The residents had relocated under the voucher program to homes in the private market. The study concluded that participants felt their relocation, neighbourhood, house and global living situation had improved.²⁴

Groups like Habitat for Humanity, who refuse government funding except for land acquisition and municipal administration fees, have been helping low-income families step up into ownership for years. In addition to interest-free mortgages, homeowners receive the pride that comes from physically helping to build their own home. Habitat for Humanity has built over 200 000 homes internationally.²⁵

Since opening in the late 1970s, Lawndale Community Church in Chicago has dramatically impacted its neighbourhood. The church established a medical center in 1984 to provide health care to the low-income urban neighbourhood. In 1987, Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (LCDC) was established. The LCDC has helped renovate old buildings and construct new residences providing affordable home ownership and affordable rental housing. The LCDC also runs a homebuyer education program instructing residents on budgeting and managing credit while also providing workshops on home repair and weatherization. The LCDC partnered with a pizza chain to establish a pizzeria serving area families while employing participants from the church's drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. The owners of the pizzeria, the Malnati family, "tithed" their 10th pizzeria, giving the whole thing to the Lawndale Community Church. The profits are reinvested into the community. The LCDC has also encouraged over \$14 million in investments through commercial development activities and was instrumental in ensuring Chicago Transit Authority established seven-day-a-week public transit to the area.²⁶ The church and LCDC have established many other projects that have benefited the community. While work remains, this not-for-profit group has profoundly impacted the neighbourhood, creating partnerships and accessing grants and gifts to revitalize the community.

Healthy communities can help families. Neighbourhoods can serve as the context in which families can receive a hand up. While redesigned neighbourhoods can lower traffic volume and provide more green spaces for healthier living, it will be home own-

ership that will sustain these communities. These positive effects of urban redesign will ultimately not restore fathers to families or make up for what poverty has inflicted on urban families. The early evaluations of revitalized public housing south of the border have yet to demonstrate large-scale significant change: It takes more than fresh paint to tackle the plight of the urban poor, but the success of places like Lawndale suggests that community partners can rebuild healthier neighbourhoods that can provide an improved context for family living.

endnotes

- 1 Canadian Press Wire (2007, February 15) Supreme Court gives green light to eco-friendly community in Pickering, Ont.
- 2 Oreopoulos, P. (2005) Neighbourhood effects in Canada: A critique. Toronto: University of Toronto Department of Economics. p.4. Retrieved from <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/oreo/research/neighbourhood%20effects%20in%20canada/neighbourhood%20effects%20in%20canada3.pdf>
- 3 Bradford, N. (2007, February) Whither the federal urban agenda? A new deal in transition. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Network. p.3. Retrieved from http://www.cprn.org/documents/46924_en.pdf
- 4 Pebley, A., Narayan S. (2003, May) Concentrated poverty versus concentrated affluence: Effects on neighbourhood social environments and children's outcomes. Santa Monica: Rand Labor and Population. p.1
- 5 Kerr, D. and Beaujot, R. (2001, May) Child poverty and family structure in Canada. London: Population Studies Centre, University of Western Ontario. p.10. Retrieved from <http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/popstudies/dp/dp01-7.pdf>
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.5.
- 7 Hymowitz, K. (2006) *Marriage and Caste in America*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. p.22.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.9.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.111.
- 10 Rotermann, M. (2007, February) Second or subsequent births to teenagers. *Health Reports* vol.18 no.1. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. p.40. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-003-XIE/2006002/articles/mothers/teenmothers.pdf>
- 11 Connor, S., Brink, S. (1999, August) Understanding the early years community impacts on child development. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada. pp.56-57. Retrieved from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/publications/nlscy/uey/1999-00092/w-99-6e.pdf>
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Latkin, C., Curry, A. (2003, March) Stressful neighbourhoods and depression: A prospective study of the impact of neighbourhood disorder. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* v.44 no.1. pp.34-44.
- 14 Gee, G., Takeuchi, D. (2004, July) Traffic stress, vehicular burden and well-being: A multilevel analysis. *Social Science and Medicine* v.59 no.2. pp.405-414.
- 15 Kweon, B., Sullivan, W., Wiley, Angela. (1998, November) Green common spaces and the social integration of inner-city older adults. *Environment and Behavior* v.30 no.6. pp.832-858.
- 16 Oreopoulos, Neighbourhood Effects, pp.14-16.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.9.
- 18 De Souza Briggs, X. (2004, March) Traps and stepping stones: Neighborhood dynamics and family well-being. *Faculty Research Working Papers Series*. Cambridge: John F. Kennedy School of Government. pp.14, 23. Retrieved from [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP04-015/\\$File/rwp04_015_briggs.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/Research/wpaper.nsf/rwp/RWP04-015/$File/rwp04_015_briggs.pdf)
- 19 Varady, D., Raffel, J., Sweeney, S., Denson, L. (2005) Attracting middle-income families in the Hope VI public housing revitalization program. *Journal of Urban Affairs* vol.27 no.2. pp.149-164.
- 20 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2007) Revitalization Grants retrieved from <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/hope6/grants/revitalization/>
- 21 Levy, D., Kaye, D. (2004, October) How are HOPE VI families faring? Income and employment. Washington: The Urban Institute. pp.1-8. Retrieved from http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org/Hope_VI_Families_Faring.pdf
- 22 Harris, L., Kaye, D. (2004, October) How are HOPE VI families faring? Health. Washington: The Urban Institute. pp.1-8. Retrieved from http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org/Hope_VI_Families_Faring.pdf
- 23 See Varady, Attracting middle-income families in the Hope VI public housing revitalization program.
- 24 Brooks, F., Zugazaga, C. Wolk, J., Adams, J. (2005, November) Resident perceptions of housing, neighbourhood, and economic conditions after relocation from public housing undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. *Research on Social Work Practice* vol.15 no.6. pp.481-490.
- 25 See Habitat for Humanity Canada at <http://habitat.ca/abouthabitatcl.php>
- 26 See Lawndale Christian Community Corporation at <http://www.lcdc.net/> and Lawndale Community Church at <http://www.lawndalechurch.org>

WANTED: CANADA'S MISSING DIVORCE DEBATE

DIVORCE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON IS WIDESPREAD, AND SOME SCHOLARS SAY THE EFFECTS CAN LAST A LIFETIME. SO WHY AREN'T WE TALKING ABOUT IT?

by Kate Fraher



Forget about climate change: Forty years ago the social equivalent of it hit Canada. It was not a tsunami, something that crashes to the shore and destroys everything in sight all at once, but rather more like the slow and gradual creep of rising temperatures or tides. The problem? Canada's divorce rate multiplied five times from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1980s.¹ "No-fault divorce," enacted in Canada in 1968 meant couples could divorce for reasons outside of infidelity and apparently, many jumped to take advantage of the newfound freedom. Statistics tell us that in 1998 36,252 children witnessed their parents divorce;² some estimate today that almost half of divorces in Canada involve children.³ That's a large group of kids, hit with a social phenomenon that has brought many a family into counselling but at the same time, is now so common that few blink an eye. Should we? What is the emotional or mental toll of divorce on kids? In Canada we have little idea for the simple reason we have chosen not to research it.

The effects of divorce on children's mental and emotional health sounds like a reasonable avenue of study. But in Canada, you'd be hard-pressed to find a scholar will-

ing to take some data sets and extract meaningful analysis about the emotional effects of divorce on children. The Canadian government has collected some data, including the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth, but does not draw any conclusions about emotional effects from it. Other analyses reflect the economics of divorce, domestic violence in the home and child support. This lack of movement on the marriage issue stands in stark opposition to the situation just south of the border where marriage, divorce and kids are the substance of study, research, and even personal reflections. In short, it is valid to ask whether Canadian social scientists are failing a generation of kids, some of whom are now adults, who were affected by divorce. When Canadian kids of divorce have questions about emotional turmoil and short- or long-term effects, they'll need to prepare themselves for a protracted silence.

Literature in the United States

This is not the case in the United States, where scholars have concluded that the effects of divorce can change and even worsen over time. Social scholar Judith Wallerstein suggests that divorce can have a "sleeping effect," where the long-term emotional problems of parental divorce do not surface until young adulthood when children begin forming romantic attachments of their own. Her work spurred others to explore the long-lasting effects of divorce in more detail. These ideas are a reminder that data collection on children of divorce should be a frequent and ongoing process spanning many years.⁴

Canadian social scholars admit that scholars in the United States have done some excellent work on the subject. Since Canadian social problems can, in some cases, mirror those of the United States, this is evidence that divorce could be affecting Canadian kids adversely, too. Jennifer Jenkins, professor of human development and applied psychology at the University of Toronto, says there is no reason to think that research findings from studies done in the U.S. and U.K. cannot be generalized to include Canada.⁵

One American scholar to study the long-term effects of divorce on children is Dr. Paul R. Amato, a professor of sociology at Pennsylvania State University.⁶ In one study, "The Effects of Divorce and Marital Discord on Adult Children's Psychological Well-Being," which he co-authored with Juliana M. Sobolewski, Amato concludes, "our study contributes to a growing literature demonstrating that discord and disruption in the family of origin can have consequences for offspring that persist well into adulthood" and although divorce is widely accepted, it "does not mean that

its consequences for children are benign.” He says that previous studies show that adults with divorced parents “report greater unhappiness, less satisfaction with life, a weaker sense of personal control, more symptoms of anxiety and depression, and a greater use of mental health services.”⁷ He also posits that with the weakening of parent-child bonds which accompanies parental separation and the frequency with which parents separate in the United States, American society could see a “gradual weakening of the bonds between the generations and a decline in the mean psychological well-being of the population.”⁸ More of this type of dialogue among social scientists on the emotional/psychological effects of divorce is needed in Canada.

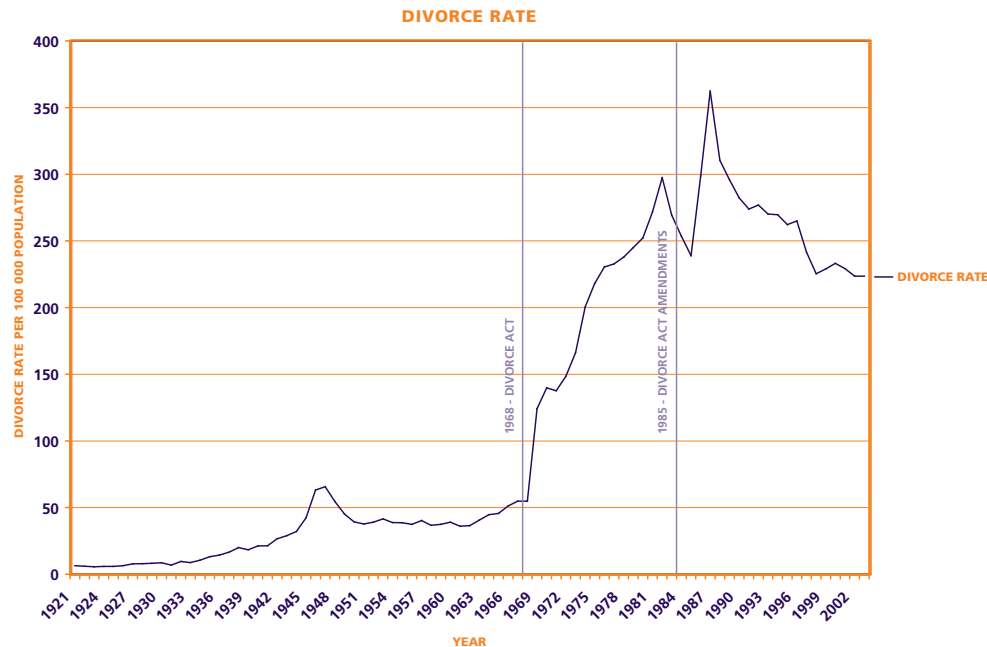
One of the difficulties in studying the effects of divorce is, as Amato explains, that divorce is really “the first step in a series of family transitions to which children must adjust.”⁹ Because divorce can result in a loss of parental income, a change of address, a change of schools, parental depression and subsequent marriages and divorces, it is challenging for researchers to sort out exactly which of these factors causes the most harm to children. Some have suggested that parental divorce is not the root problem, rather that other occurrences before and after parental divorce are the real cause of children’s negative outcomes. Again, this highlights the importance of conducting studies which are longitudinal in nature and methodologically sound.

The Canadian search for divorce stats

The only long-term study of Canadian children is the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY) which began in 1994. The study is a massive collection of data on children and youth derived from surveys asking detailed questions such as, “how did your child respond to his or her first bath?” (to parents) and “how many times have you skipped class without permission” (to children). Academics have been able to write reports on a wide range of topics such as childhood obesity, child-care patterns, and child custody and access from data derived exclusively from the NLSCY

One Canadian researcher has used this data to examine children’s mental health after divorce. Lisa Strohschein, a professor of sociology at the University of Alberta, thinks she is the only Canadian to use NLSCY data for this purpose.¹⁰ Her study, “Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories,” was published in 2005 and she hopes to release another report on findings from more recent data collections soon.¹¹ When asked why more

scholars have not used this data to study child mental health outcomes and parental divorce, she says this type of data is restricted by Statistics Canada and the process to get permission to use it can be fairly intense. She also suspects that once the data collection process is complete, the data will be more useful, and more academics will want to use it.¹²



SOURCE: Calculations by author using data from Statistics Canada

There are other opinions on why Canadians are not writing more about the emotional/psychological effects of divorce on children. Don Kerr, a professor of sociology at King’s University College at the University of Western Ontario admits that the issue is a politically contentious one. He says it’s possible that government agencies such as Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Social Development Canada are not willing to grapple with it for that reason. While this work may be necessary, he warns that overstating the problem, moralizing or stigmatizing persons or families experiencing the difficulties of divorce is not helpful.¹³

Most Canadians might expect the scientist, including the social scientist, to turn a blind eye to the whims of emotions. Not so. Douglas Farrow, a professor of religious studies at McGill University and a consultant with the Institute for the Study of Marriage, Law and Culture, speculates that party politics and political correctness prevent Canada from tackling some of the most contentious issues related to children and family. In the process of legalizing same-sex marriage, he notes, the government showed little or no interest in studying what the redefinition of marriage would mean for Canadian society. He believes the decision to pass same-sex marriage legislation without research into the possible outcomes for children suggests “a combination of apathy and cowardice at the political level.”¹⁴

It was politically inconvenient, says Farrow, for politi-

cal parties to stand up to the court's judgment in the case of homosexual marriage for fear that they would be labelled either "anti-Charter" or "anti-gay." Farrow wonders why few lessons seem to have been learned from previous changes to marriage law, which were also introduced without adequate study, such as those that made divorce easier, but on the positive side, he notes that "scholars of varying political stripes are beginning to realize that the research needs to be done before precipitous changes are made." And he thinks that funding agencies would be open to giving money to a research project on family structure, parenting, and children's outcomes if the project were properly constructed and had the necessary expertise.¹⁵ "Studies of the children of divorced parents show that they tend to be disadvantaged and troubled. That should lead to less divorce or at least to more effort to help people stay married. Instead some seem to think that we should downplay the importance of marriage and intact families. Then those who aren't a part of it won't feel so bad," says Farrow.¹⁶

Personal stories from the States

While statisticians continue to accuse one another of inadequate sampling and uncontrolled variables, more personal stories of divorce are surfacing from the United States; they are written by the first generation of children raised under no-fault divorce and therefore after divorce became a widespread phenomenon. Although their books are largely discounted by academics for being "unscientific" or "retrospective," the popularity of their message suggests that their experience is not the exception. As the first generation of children raised with widespread divorce in America speak, a common theme can be felt in their writing: At the time of their parents' divorce and even now, they struggle with feelings of being misunderstood and alone. Elizabeth Marquardt, an affiliate scholar at the Institute for American Values and an adult child of divorce herself, is the author of *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. In her book, she explains very clearly why she chose to write what she did: "I felt that my parents and the culture at large had very little understanding of my real experience... Too many people thought that because my parents loved me and didn't fight, or because their divorce took place before I could remember, or because I had managed to grow up and become a reasonably functional person, then the divorce must not have been a big deal."¹⁷ Ava Chin, in the introduction to her book *Split: Stories from a Generation Raised on Divorce*¹⁸, repeats the same theme: "In putting together this book, I wanted to finally reveal what it was like for us, the first generation that grew up in divorced families en masse. I wanted to hear from the very generation that until now had remained silent. What was it like for them to watch their home life split in two? How did they juggle their relationship with parents who were learning to fly solo again, many of whom later remarried? And now in their twenties and thirties, what were their

takes on love and marriage today?"¹⁹

Many other books have been written by adult children of divorce over the past several years.²⁰ The authors repeat a sense of frustration at feeling unheard in their experience as children, and now as grown-up children of divorced parents.

Where are the Canadian voices?

So why aren't Canadian adult children of divorce speaking out about their experience? Why aren't Canadian academics and Canadian governments discussing the emotional and psychological effects of parental divorce? It could be that silence will reign until social scientists undertake some good research. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, American social scholar and author of *The Divorce Culture*, says "social scientists are among the chief arbiters of what constitutes a social problem. It is they who are called upon to define the size and scope of a problem and to identify the populations most at risk."²¹

On climate change there may be disagreement on what causes it, how it happens – and how to respond. But we still do a whole lot more than merely document rising temperatures. We ask why, and we ask how we, as a society, might suffer consequences, in an attempt to prepare for them. With divorce, we documented the rising trend, and promptly shelved that data to let the dust collect. The astounding lack of curiosity on marriage matters – and the effect on children – is something Canadians would be wise to overcome.

endnotes

- 1 Dumas, J. and Y. Péron. (1992). Marriage and conjugal life in Canada: Current demographic analysis. Ottawa: Statistics Canada Catalogue, 91-534E.
- 2 Ambert, A.M. (2005). Divorce: Facts, causes, and consequences. *Contemporary Family Trends*. Ottawa: The Vanier Institute of the Family, p. 8. Retrieved from http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/divorce_05.pdf
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee discuss the "sleeping effect" in their 2000 book, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: The 25 Year Landmark Study*. New York: Hyperion Books.
- 5 J. Jenkins, personal communication, February 8, 2007
- 6 His studies, world renowned, include the following: Amato, P.R. (1994). Life-span adjustment of children to their parents' divorce. *The Future of Children*, vol. 4, no.1: 143-164 and Amato, P.R. (2005). The impact of family formation change on the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of the next generation. *The Future of Children* vol. 15, no.2: 75-96 and Amato, P.R., & Booth, A. (1991). Consequences of parental divorce and marital unhappiness for adult well-being. *Social Forces*, 69, 895-914.
- 7 Amato, P.R. & Sobolewski, J.M. (2001). The effects of divorce and marital discord on adult children's psychological well-being. *American Sociological Review* vol. 66, issue 6, p. 901.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 918.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 917.
- 10 L. Strohschein, personal communication, March 12, 2007.
- 11 Strohschein, L. (2005). Parental divorce and child mental health trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67: 1286-1300.
- 12 L. Strohschein, personal communication, March 12, 2007.
- 13 D. Kerr, personal communication, February 2, 2007.
- 14 D. Farrow, personal communication, February 20, 2007.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Marquardt, E. (2005). *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. New York: Crown Publishers, p. 169.
- 18 Chin, A. (Ed.). (2002). *Split: Stories from a Generation Raised on Divorce*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Among them, these two: Stall, S. (2000). *The Love They Lost: Living with the legacy of our parents' divorce*. New York: Delta. Abbas, J. (2004). *Generation Ex: Adult children of divorce and the healing of our pain*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press.
- 21 Whitehead, B.D. (1997). *The Divorce Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., p. 104.

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE

A VALID "LIFESTYLE CHOICE" OR ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF DUMB SEX?

by Jennifer Roback Morse

The trend toward single motherhood by choice is unmistakable in both the U.S. and Canada. A new organization, Single Mothers by Choice, runs workshops for would-be single mothers, offering other single mothers as instructors and role models.¹ But is this new development really anything to celebrate?

Consequences for the child

Numerous studies have established that children of single mothers have poorer life chances than the children of married parents.² But the new single mothers by choice may discount this evidence, since it is weighted by the large numbers of poor single mothers. For instance, much of the impact of divorce on the child's propensity to drop out of school is due simply to the loss of income associated with the divorce.³ The new single mothers by choice are often affluent, educated, accomplished professionals. They may imagine these advantages will surely overcome these well-documented disadvantages.

Not so quick. Much of the research controls for income and education. This means that even children of relatively well-off mothers would do better if their parents were married to each other. For instance, even accounting for income, fatherless boys are more likely to be aggressive⁴ and to ultimately become incarcerated.⁵ A recent British study offers tantalizing hints about the possibility that the children of single mothers are more likely to become schizophrenic.⁶ And an extensive study of family structure in Sweden took account of the mental illness history of the parents, as well as the family's socio-economic status. Yet even in the most generous welfare state in the world, with very accepting attitudes toward unmarried parenthood, the children of single parents were at significantly higher risk of psychiatric disease, suicide attempts, and substance abuse.⁷

The career woman who becomes a mother on her own undoubtedly is counting on placing her child in some form of daycare. Perhaps her child will prove to be one of the lucky children who comes home from daycare with a better vocabulary and social skills. But not all children do well in daycare. The fact that problems are statistically unlikely is no comfort if your child happens to be one of the children who becomes aggressive or does not bond properly.⁸ A married mother has options about what to do with a vulnerable child. The unmarried mother will likely have to leave her child in daycare, even if he does not do well there.

And what if the mother discovers that she really would like to be in a relationship? Does her subsequent marriage to a different man help the child? All too often, the answer is no. The presence of a step-father actually exacerbates, rather than relieves, many of the problems of unmarried parenthood. Children in step-parent families show more developmental difficulties than those in intact nuclear families. The adjustment of children in step-parent families is similar to that of children in one-parent families.⁹ The step-father and children can easily become rivals for the mother's attention. The introduction of a new parent disrupts established loyalties and creates conflicted loyalties, creating complications for discipline.¹⁰ The probability of a boy becoming incarcerated is greater for the sons in step-parent families, than even those in single-mother households.¹¹

Two paths to becoming a single mother by choice

In spite of all these uncertainties and difficulties, many well-educated women nonetheless choose single motherhood. A woman can become an unmarried mother by choice by two different routes. She can have a sexual encounter with someone she knows, choosing not to marry. Or, she can be artificially inseminated with the sperm of an anonymous sperm donor.

Agreeing to have a child together without any kind of commitment differs slightly from children born to cohabiting couples, in that these couples may not even live together. The mother may assure the father that she has no intention of asking for financial or emotional support. She may even refrain from putting his name on the birth certificate.

The trouble with this verbal agreement is that it is not enforceable. She may decide a year or two later that being a single mother was more difficult than she expected. If the father declines to help, she may take him to court to force him to pay child support. On the other hand, the father might be the one to change his mind. He may find his child more interesting and attractive once he or she is out of diapers. If the mother refuses to honour visitation and other paternal rights, he may take her to court to have them enforced.

No matter which parent initiates this dispute, one thing is certain: The mother who intended to have a child "on her own," ends up instead with a lifelong relationship with a man she didn't like well enough to marry.

The anonymous sperm donor approach has the advantage of avoiding complications with the genetic father of the child. But what may seem like an advantage to the mother is a problem for the child. Some children of anonymous sperm donors are beginning to come forward to tell their stories in op-ed articles and on the internet. They have very definite feelings about having no father: They don't like it.¹²

When a woman chooses to have a child using an anonymous sperm donor, she is making a plan that her child will never have a relationship with his or her father. But she has no right to deprive her child of the paternal relationship. Even with the best of intentions and efforts, fathers and children sometimes have no bond. Sometimes the father dies. Sometimes, he deserts the family, or the mother ejects him from the household. Even in those sad cases, children and their fathers can sometimes create a connection. Using an anonymous sperm donor deliberately cuts off the paternal affiliation from the very beginning.

A creation of the state

This kind of parentage is an artificial creation of the state. Under the laws of most U.S. states, for instance, the anonymous sperm donor is considered a "legal stranger" to the child. The father has neither rights nor responsibilities toward his child. Anonymous sperm donorship would not exist without this legal shield. Men would not make a deposit in a sperm bank if they thought the mother could later sue for child support. Women would not make a withdrawal if they thought a stranger might land on their doorstep, demanding visitation rights with his child.

This legal arrangement deliberately separates children from their fathers, and mothers and fathers from each other. This artificial separation is not possible in the ordinary course of male and female interactions. There is no public purpose served by creating this permanent estrangement among individuals who ordinarily would be forming the most basic and most intimate of social unions. And incidentally, it contributes to the entirely pernicious social vision that fathers are unnecessary.

Why does the state do this? Simply because the woman wants it. This is a deep injustice in which the state should decline to participate.

Retreat from relationship

The trend toward single motherhood among the well-educated is unmistakable. For many women, the choice is more by default than an actual decision. They have taken their career ambitions more seriously than their fertility ambitions. By the time they have achieved enough career success to feel comfortable embarking on motherhood, they find themselves with limited options. Of the smaller pool of available men, many prefer to marry younger women. By the time a woman enters her thirties, her peak fertility is typically past. She feels the desire for motherhood more urgently, at exactly the moment that her marriage options have become limited.

And so the modern, emancipated woman who spent years trying to avoid having a baby, finds herself in a surprising situation. She wants to have a baby without having sex. Having a baby without having sex might seem a little bit like skipping dessert and going straight for the Brussels sprouts. But these two distinctively modern situations are linked by a common fear: The fear of relationship.

Fear of relationship is at the heart of the sexual revolution in which sexual activity without a live baby is considered an entitlement. We modern women do not have to take seriously the possibility of having a baby with every man we hook-up with. We can be sexual with someone we have no intention of being connected to. Young women now view the “hook-up,” a short-term uncommitted sexual encounter, as a substitute for the relationships they fear.¹³

The single mother by choice has also retreated from relationship, but by a slightly different route. She wants a baby, but has given up on finding a suitable mate.

This is all very sad, not just because of the risks for any children who result from these non-unions. It is sad that sex, that most intimate of all human activities, has become detached from genuine human connection. All of us, women, children and men alike, deserve better.

endnotes

- 1 Plate, T. (2007, February 8). Unmarried, with Children. *Seattle Times*, Retrieved online at <http://archives.seattletimes.nwsour.com/cgi-bin/texis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=plate08&date=20070208&query=tom+plate>
- 2 For useful summaries, see Gallagher, M., Baker, J. (2004). Do moms and dads matter? Evidence from the social sciences on family structure and the best interests of the child. *Margins*, 4, p. 161-180. Moore, K.A., Jekielek, S.M., Emig, C. (2002, June). Marriage from a child's perspective: How does family structure affect children and what can we do about it? *Child Trends Research Brief*. Roback-Morse, J. (2005). *Smart Sex: Finding Life-long Love in a Hook-up World*, Dallas: Spence Publishing.
- 3 Pong, S.-L., Ju, D.-B. (2000, March). The effects of change in family structure and income on dropping out of middle and high school. *Journal of Family Issues*, 21(2). pp. 147-169.
- 4 Vaden-Kiernan, N., Ialongo, N.S., Pearson, J., Kellan, S. (1995). Household family structure and children's aggressive behavior: A longitudinal study of urban elementary school children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 23(5). pp. 553-568.
- 5 Harper, C.C., McLanahan, S.S. (2004). Father absence and youth incarceration. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 14(3). pp. 369-397.
- 6 Hall, S. (2006, November 2). Schizophrenia much more likely in children of single parents. *The Guardian*. Retrieved online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/medicine/story/0,,1953958,00.html>.
- 7 Weitoft, G.R., Hjern, A., Haglund, B., Rosen, M. (2003, January 25). Mortality, severe morbidity and injury in children living with single parents in Sweden: A population-based study. *The Lancet*, 361(9354).
- 8 Carey, B. (2007, March 26). Poor behavior linked to time in daycare. *New York Times*. Retrieved online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/26/us/26center.html?ex=1332561600&en=556a3432ec2c944e&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss>. See also, Belsky, J., Woodworth, S., Crnic K. (1996). Trouble in the second year: Three questions about family interaction. *Child Development*, 67. pp. 556-578 and NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (1998, August). Early childcare and self-control, compliance and problem behavior at twenty-four and thirty-six months. *Child Development*, 69(4). pp. 1145-70.
- 9 Zill, N. (1998). Behavior, achievement and health problems among children in stepfamilies: Findings from a national survey of child health. In Hetherington, E.M., Arasteh, J.D. (Eds.), *Impact of Divorce, Single Parenting and Stepparenting on Children* (pp. 325-68). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- 10 Amato, P.R., Rivera, F. (1999, May). Paternal involvement and children's behavior problems. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61. pp. 375-384. Dawson, D.A. (1991, August). Family Structure and children's health and well-being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 53, pp. 573-584. McLanahan, S.S., Booth, K. (1989, August). Mother-only families: Problems, prospects and politics. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, no. 3 pp. 557-80 find that remarriage does not fully repair the loss to the children of divorced mothers. See also Furstenberg, F. (1994, Spring). History and current status of divorce in the United States. *The Future of Children*, 4, no.1. p. 37.
- 11 Harper, C.C., McLanahan, S.S. (2004). Father absence and youth incarceration. pp. 369-397.
- 12 Clark, K. (2006, December 17). My father was an anonymous sperm donor. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/15/AR2006121501820.html>
- 13 Is “hooking up” unhealthy for teens? (2007, March 5). *Today Show*. NBC. In which Amber Madison, author of the book *Hooking Up* says, explicitly, “women are afraid of relationships.” Retrieved from http://video.msn.com/v/us/msnbc.htm?f=00&g=5e5024cd-05f2-4ca4-a6d4-b85fd2e1b8f9&p=hotvideo_m_edpicks&t=m5&r=f=http://www.msnbc.m

“WHAT IF?”

In his new book, *The Future of Marriage*, David Blankenhorn reports the results of a study which asks, “What if the proportion of U.S. children living with their two married parents were as high today as it was in 1970?” In 1970, 68.7 per cent of U.S. children lived with their two married parents, compared with 59.7 per cent in 2000, a drop of 9 percentage points. This date is especially significant for Canada, since no-fault divorce was instituted in 1968. Conducted by Professor Paul Amato of Pennsylvania State University, this study gives a look at some very specific indicators of child well-being.¹

With U.S. family structure as strong today as it was in 1970, the yearly impact would be that:

643,000 fewer American adolescents would fail a grade each year.

1,040,000 fewer adolescents would be suspended from school.

531,000 fewer adolescents would need therapy.

464,000 fewer adolescents would engage in delinquent behaviour.

453,000 fewer youth would be involved in violence.

515,000 fewer youth would begin smoking cigarettes.

179,000 fewer youth would consider suicide.

62,000 fewer youth would actually attempt suicide.

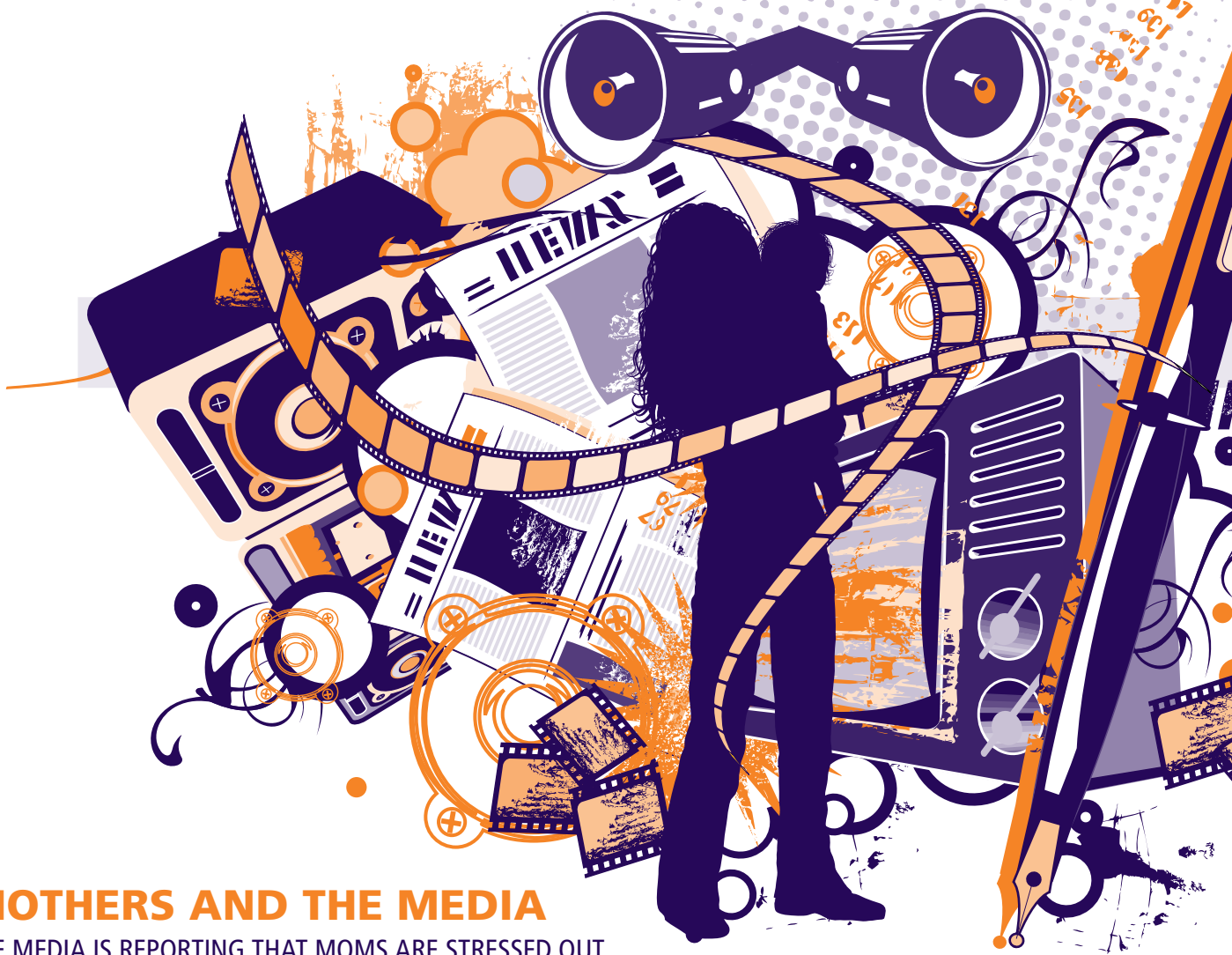
While the corresponding numbers would be lower for Canada because of its lower population, these numbers convey a sense of the very real human price that children have paid for the revolution in family structure.

From the reactions of college students to my campus speeches and debates, I know that many educated young people believe that they will be able to avoid the costs associated with cohabitation and unmarried parenting. They believe their income and educational status will protect them and their children from many of these problems. They may be correct, in that the worst effects of unmarried parenting are concentrated among the poor.

I invite such college-educated young professionals to take this factor into consideration: Your life-style choice amounts to an endorsement of unmarried parenthood, not only for you and your peers, but for the poor as well. If the argument is correct that the worst harms are concentrated among the poor, you are in effect doing something that will be fun and perhaps not too harmful for you, but a disaster for others – namely the poor.

Think about it.

Amato, P.R. (2005, Fall). The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation,” *The Future of Children*, 15, no. 2. p. 89, quoted in Blankenhorn, D. (2007). *The Future of Marriage*. New York: Encounter Books. pp. 243-4.



MOTHERS AND THE MEDIA

THE MEDIA IS REPORTING THAT MOMS ARE STRESSED OUT...
BECAUSE THEY ARE


by Andrea Mrozek

It was back in October 2006 that “The Motherlode – a Complete Celebration of Motherhood,” was held in downtown Toronto, at the Marriott hotel on Yonge Street. The 10th annual conference, presented by York University’s Centre for Feminist Research, Association for Research on Mothering, addressed topics like teen mothers, raising bi-racial children, post-partum depression and mommy blogs, alongside raising transgendered children, sex-trade workers and mothering and globalization.¹ Certainly a mix from the usual to the deliberately unusual: A discussion of transgendered children and mothering is, after all, an academic pre-ament.²

These academics self-define as “feminists.” But the term has little meaning left. If it refers to the idea that women are equal to men, we are all feminists now. A 2001 survey of adolescent girls showed 97 per cent believed “lifestyle choices” should not be limited by sex.³ Indeed, young women today have every opportunity open to them – and that includes motherhood and a meaningful career.⁴ Yet for a time, second-wave feminists saw things a little differently. Strongly anti-

motherhood, these feminists thought of mothering as “drudgery,” something that women should not be expected to do, unless men did precisely half. Raising children was no longer a respectable feminine calling, but a chore. It’s a reputation feminists today, arguably the third wave, are struggling to overcome.⁵

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) acted as a force behind second-wave feminism. And if her book sounds offensive, it’s likely because writing that motherhood is “domestic drudgery” and a “waste of human self”⁶ is indeed an assault on the natural inclination to view the self-sacrifice of mothers as a positive. Modern feminists have not left that negative image behind: In 2004 the authors of *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women* mimicked Friedan’s sentiments, writing about the self-realization of women in the 1960s and onwards: “[y]oung women started wondering why they should get married at 21, let alone 18, if that meant getting chained to the diaper pail all the sooner.”⁷ Statements like these are the best proof that second-wave feminism,



very much unlike first-wave suffragettes, did indeed image motherhood as a prison cell in which women are chained.⁸

Today media reports tell the stories of mothers who are indeed in chains – yet the new prison cell is stress and harried attempts at work-life balance. It appears the press presents this negative view time and again because that is how we live. A search for family stories during a two-week period in February⁹ revealed headlines revolving tirelessly around the stress of balancing work and parenting.¹⁰ Parents – especially mothers – are confined to a life that makes the sweat shops of India sound relaxing.

Is there not one woman nationwide who finds peace, a sense of fulfillment and strength through motherhood, a notion which is, or rather could be, beautiful for its simplicity?

Media in the middle: Creator or purveyor of news?

The news media are constrained by certain standing rules on how and what they report, which may lead to a skewed view of motherhood. They must focus on that which is new, which doesn't bode well for front-page motherhood headlines. Second, the media have a tendency to expose, even exaggerate, the negative: A rising divorce rate in adults over age 50 makes the cover of *Maclean's*; that other cohorts are experiencing lower divorce rates is not a cover story.¹¹ All in all, the disintegration of family structure is more newsworthy than Norman Rockwell-esque photo albums.

Finally, there's the second wave of feminism to ride: And the media trend towards credulity on feminist mantras.¹² Headlines that assume a patriarchal conspiracy, that assert a job bias against women who have spent time as mothers at home are some evidence of that.¹³ There is the notion that being “just” a mother, working inside the home, is a waste of valuable column inches, unless balanced with working. The result? The media report on the screaming stress levels of doing both, with stories that focus on making careers successful, with little or no emphasis on successfully raising a family.

Evolutions of feminism

Friedan's “problem that had no name” was not that women faced discrimination in the workplace or that they had few choices outside mothering, but mothering itself. “The feminine mystique permits even encourages women to ignore the question of their identity. The mystique says they can answer the question ‘who am I’ by saying ‘Tom's wife ... Mary's mother.’”¹⁴ As a result, Friedan says, women could not know who they were. “American women no longer know who they are. They are sorely in need of a new image to help them find their identity.”¹⁵ American women had

an identity, of course, but Friedan didn't like it. Motherhood and homemaking could no longer be the all-consuming tasks that they most certainly were; motherhood would become a part-time affair, as women balanced their “missing” identity with work outside the home.

Friedan's footprint has been larger than most give her credit for; she is very much with us today. Would not the reasonable woman today merely be happy she has choices and move on? Indeed, the reasonable woman would – but law professor Linda Hirshman, author of *Get to Work: A Manifesto for Women of the World*, well, she isn't one. She recently used her pulpit for yet another modern incarnation of Friedan's words; this time more totalitarian in nature: Educated women must work.¹⁶ In an earlier article¹⁷ Hirshman criticized “choice feminism” – she explained herself in an interview with ABC news. “I think it's a mistake for these highly educated and capable women to make that choice [to stay home],” she said. “I would like to see a description of their daily lives that substantiates that position.” She went on: “One of the things I've done working on my book is to read a lot of the diaries online, and their description of their lives does not sound particularly interesting or fulfilling for a complicated person, for a complicated, educated person.”¹⁸

So the struggle between sisters continues.

Mothers in the media: The battle of the Crittendens

Ann Crittenden is a former reporter for the *New York Times*, a writer for *Fortune* and *Newsweek* and the author of two books. The mother of one, she lives in Washington, D.C.

Danielle Crittenden is a writer for the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* and author of two books. Mother of three, she too lives in Washington, D.C.

Both are journalists, both are now mothers and writers at the same time. Both hold professional distinction, both are attractive, both are working in and outside the home.

And there the similarities end.

Ann's most famous book is *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued*.¹⁹ She is concerned that mothers are taken for granted by society. “Even our children have absorbed the cultural message that mothers have no stature. A friend of mine gave up a job she loved as the head of a publishing house in order to raise her daughter. One day, when she corrected the girl, the child snapped, ‘Why should I listen to you? You're just a housewife!’”²⁰

Ann writes that feminism hoped that domestic drudgery, as described by Friedan, would be swept into the dustbin of history “as men and women linked

arms and marched off to run the world in a new egalitarian alliance. It never occurred to me that women might be at home because there were children there; that housewives might become extinct, but mothers and fathers never would.²¹

She posits that women are discouraged from taking on that very task we claim to think is the most important – mothering – because of a lack of recognition and even penalties, for the (thankless) labour. How this is done is through an inflexible workplace that does not allow for part-time work, furthermore, she asserts that marriage is not an equal partnership and that government social policies don't recognize the care of one's family members as work. Nannies – legal ones, anyway – earn social security credits in the U.S., mothers at home do not.²²

Enter the second Crittenden: Danielle, author of *What our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman*.²³ The problem in her study is different, yet it again features the discontented female. Danielle argues that in a way, women have been sold a raw bill of goods: We have been told that we can become a doctor or a journalist, or have a baby, or probably both, when in reality many realize at age 40 that it is too late for motherhood, thereby denying women that possibility. "Feminism," she writes, "for all its efforts, hasn't been able to banish fundamental female desires from us, either – and we simply cannot be happy if we ignore them."²⁴ Young women today believe they can achieve anything – but they further believe that motherhood is not actually the greatest of achievements.

Ann also points out that mothers and fathers can never cease to exist. And polls bear this out: Not only do women today want to be mothers, but fertility rates in every OECD nation with the exceptions of Mexico and Turkey fall well below the number of children women desire to have.²⁵ For example, in Canada, the fertility rate is approximately 1.5 – Canadian women, however, desire something closer to three children. So what's the problem?

Friedan feminism is one answer, which diminishes mothering and indeed, parenting, by accepting the description of a lot of motherly tasks as "domestic drudgery." Neither Friedan nor Ann Crittenden have chosen to see working an 80-hour week, not uncommon for journalists, at a low pay scale as corporate drudgery, or a grind. The endless interviews, transcriptions, fact checking and demurely deferring to some head honcho's crackpot story ideas strike them as fulfillment and working toward something meaningful.

Journalism, of course, is rife with those intrinsic benefits more than present in mothering: Self expression, issue analysis, creativity. That is precisely Danielle Crittenden's point – not Ann's – on the motherhood front: Motherhood is intrinsically valuable, irrespective of wages, pensions, or rights. Ann might like extrinsic

benefits to be applied to motherhood that it be made meaningful enough to actually do it, Danielle might say that powerful intrinsic benefits are what makes mothering valuable; and furthermore, to make matters for the friends of Friedan worse – feminist notions on motherhood are at least partly to blame for a lack of respect for mothering in general.

Recovering feminists and regenerating mothers

It is a testimony to the power of motherhood that in spite of largely negative headlines, in spite of second-wave feminist mantras, most women say they would like to be mothers, and the most recent World Values Survey shows that women consistently say that being a housewife is as fulfilling as working in a paid job.²⁶

Many women may believe that being a housewife is as fulfilling as work outside the home but can't afford to mother full time on economic grounds. Others simply don't want to. But we without a doubt also absorbed those feminist mantras – the negative second-wave notions – in the media, in our schooling and in our work. Steeped in this environment, it is highly unlikely that we notice where that view took us – into the land of "fulfilling" career advancement – with an order of kids on the side.

The media portray motherhood as a part-time affair, to be balanced with the BlackBerry as one would balance a lunch meeting with the CEO, because that is precisely what we are doing. It will take a generation of new young women to form a new set of headlines – headlines we can hope reflect a less harried reality. And perhaps that is already starting.

There were two writers present in the February 2007 media review who seemed confident that having kids and caring for them was not a bad thing: Kathy Woodard, family affairs columnist for the *Western Standard*, and Jennifer McDougall at the *Calgary Herald*. McDougall wrote this on February 9, explaining her decision to have four kids: "So why did we do it? Because having multiple siblings – likewise, being parents to multiple children – is a fascinating experience that never dulls. Besides, I'm convinced that through occasional chaos and a demand for flexibility, open-minded, tolerant adults emerge. Best of all, my siblings are the best friends I'll ever have. They're the greatest gift my parents gave me."²⁷ Woodard, mother of nine, expresses constant fascination with her children's lives – it's not stress-free, yet it is meaningful. She is not trying to be Martha Stewart and Hillary Clinton at the same time, in one body. These two writers are lone voices in a harried wilderness – but positive voices for motherhood nonetheless and a basis on which to build. Motherhood may, after all, resurrect itself on its own merits, as more women rise up to take back this, the proudest of feminine, if not feminist, legacies.

READ ALL ABOUT IT! IF YOU HAVE TIME...

The mothering headlines in review

Mothers are in the media. A study of articles for a two-week period in February 2007 revealed a picture of stressed-out working moms. The following is a sample of those headlines.

OTTAWA CITIZEN, February 21: "Number of antisocial youths quadruples since 1950s: Study blames violence in media, video games." This story is based on a study showing that kids today are behaving badly – worse than in recent decades.¹ The study asserts at least in part that a lack of parental attention is to blame – we're too busy to raise our kids.

GLOBE AND MAIL, February 22: "So, how are the kids?" This article references a study showing that the number of antisocial youths has quadrupled (see headline above). The opinion piece responding to the study answers the headline question, saying, "According to Anne-Marie Ambert, [the study's lead researcher] the kids aren't all right." The author concludes: "If everything works against children except attentive, stay-at-home, well-off, non-materialistic, non-permissive, religious parents who discourage individualism, aren't overworked, don't leave their children 'with serial caretakers,' don't have 'a critical mass' of low-income neighbours and shield their children from the media that saturate their lives, modern society might as well just pull the covers over its head and give up."²

NATIONAL POST, February 21: "Family dilemma," documents the struggle of a father with work-life balance.³

PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER, February 20: "New moms agonize over returning to work."⁴

HAMILTON SPECTATOR, February 21: "When are you going to be home, Mom?" asks how parents can "comfort, discipline, guide and love through the lines of a telephone, surrounded by workmates." This story explains how to parent by telephone, opening with the following quote, "I can't really understand you, you're crying too hard. You failed your math test? It's OK. There are Oreos in the cupboard. I'll be home soon." It ends with "Tips for parenting from the office."⁵

CALGARY HERALD, February 19: "The great family experiment: Whether you see them as frazzled or liberated, the one thing certain about modern families is they're heading into uncharted territory." The article describes parents as "overworked, overtired and overextended," and concludes "No one has ever done it like we're doing it now. This is the great experiment of the modern family."⁶

CALGARY HERALD, February 15: "Families turn to nannies for child care," identifies again, the tough decision of moms who get others to care for their kids.⁷

GLOBE AND MAIL, February 14: "For today's family, time's not on their side. Hectic schedules, longer work weeks contribute to less togetherness than in 80s."⁸ The news in this story was reflective of harried souls – a Statistics Canada survey that showed workers are spending less time with family.

STARPHOENIX, February 12 wrote the headline "Culture erodes child-parent connection: psychologist" writing "Kids don't respect their elders as much as they used to."⁹

Could anyone claim to be surprised?

- 1 Ambert, A. (2007). The Rise in the Number of Children and Adolescents Who Exhibit Problematic Behaviors: Multiple Causes. The Vanier Institute. Retrieved online March 23, 2007 at <http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cfb/behavior.html>
- 2 Bailey, S. (2007, February 22). So, how are the kids? *Globe and Mail*, p. A16.
- 3 Waisberg, D. (2007, February 21). Family dilemma. *National Post*, p. WK1.
- 4 Greeno, C. (2007, February 20). New moms agonize over returning to work. *Peterborough Examiner*, p. A6.
- 5 Marr, L.G. (2007, February 20). "When are you going to be home, Mom?"; It's 4 p.m. at the office. Just wait for it. The phone calls from home. The kids are alone, unsupervised and in need of direction. Guilt aside, how do you comfort, discipline, guide and love through the lines of a telephone, surrounded by workmates? *Hamilton Spectator*, p. G10.
- 6 Heinrich Gray, K. (2007, February 19). The great family experiment. *Calgary Herald*, p. D1.
- 7 Frazer-Harrison, A. (2007, February 15). Families turn to nannies for child care. *Calgary Herald*, p. NA09.
- 8 Mahoney, J. (2007, February 14). For today's family, time's not on their side. *Globe and Mail*, p. A1.
- 9 Warren, J. (2007, February 12). Culture erodes child-parent connection: psychologist. *StarPhoenix*, p. A8.

endnotes

- 1 The Motherlode was organized by York University academics Andrea O'Reilly, Director of the Association for Research on Mothering, and Nancy Mandell, professor at the department of sociology. Conference agenda retrieved March 23, 2007 at <http://www.yorku.ca/arm/motherlode.html>
- 2 There are no reliable statistics on how many Canadian adults – let alone children – call themselves "transgendered."
- 3 Hymowitz, K. *Marriage and Caste in America*. (2006) Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. p. 126.
- 4 Most young women want both: We are better prepared, however for the career, not the children. Hence "...the single most profound, life-changing decision that the majority of us eventually make is the one we are now least prepared for – the act of having a child." Crittenden, D. (1999). *What our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why happiness eludes the modern woman*. New York: Simon and Schuster. p. 120.
- 5 First-wave feminists are usually understood to be the early feminists, those campaigning for the right to vote – the suffragettes. The second wave may include feminists of the 1960s, around the time of the sexual revolution. The third wave is the most difficult to define, but includes feminists today, the 1990s and beyond. The waves of feminism remain disputed.
- 6 Friedan, B. *The Feminine Mystique*. (1963) New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd.
- 7 Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. (2004). *The Mommy Myth: The idealization of motherhood and how it has undermined women*. New York: Free Press. p. 29.
- 8 *Der Spiegel* ran a cover story on working mothers, state social expenditures on family and Germany's low birth rates in February 2006 called *Der vergoldete Käfig* (The Golden Cage). The cover art featured a woman dressed in a business suit behind the bars of a golden playpen, surrounded by two children.
- 9 The author searched FPIInformart, a media search engine that compiles all of Canada's newspaper articles and many American ones. Search terms included "mother," "parents," and "parenting" among others for a two-week period in February. The results written here are an unscientific survey, but a faithful representation of the type of articles that appeared.
- 10 The media seem to prefer the term parents, even where it is clear that the interviews are largely women, or to be specific, mothers.
- 11 Kingston, A. (2007, January). The 27-year itch: The only age group in which divorce is on the rise is people over 50. Couples used to stick it out. Not anymore. *Maclean's*, p. 40. The author cites the decreasing overall divorce stats in paragraph three: "The overall divorce rate, which hovers at 38 per cent, declined 11 per cent between 1993 and 2003, the latest year for which statistics are available."
- 12 "...the new feminists like Susan Faludi and Naomi Wolf can argue, to a largely credulous press, that women are being brainwashed back into the 1950s by a male-dominated media and its female stooges..." Crittenden, D. *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*. New York: Simon and Schuster. p. 20
- 13 One such article: Gallus, T. (2007, February 23). Career Shunt: A comeback mom cries foul. *The Globe and Mail*, p. c2. "... I realized I had to return to work, but little did I know that job-hunting would prove to be so humbling and difficult after five years away from the workplace. My job search began late last year, and I thought I would be working by now. I believed that my absence to have and raise children wouldn't be questioned. Instead, I feel stuck in a June Cleaver time warp," the author writes.
- 14 Friedan, B. *The Feminine Mystique*. (1963) New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd. p. 71.
- 15 *Ibid.* (1963) New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd. p. 72.
- 16 Hirshman, L. (2006). *Get to Work: A manifesto for women of the world*. New York: Viking Adult.
- 17 Hirshman, L. (2005). Homeward Bound. *American Prospect*. Retrieved online March 23, 2007 at <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.ww?section=root&name=ViewWeb&articleId=10659>
- 18 How to raise kids: Stay home or go to work? (2006, February 23). ABC News. Retrieved online March 23, 2007 at <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/AmericanFamily/story?id=1653069&page=1>
- 19 Crittenden, A. (2001). *The Price of Motherhood: Why the most important job in the World is still the least valued*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 3.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Crittenden, D. (1999). *What our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- 24 *Ibid.* p.23.
- 25 D'Addio, A.C. and d'Ercole, M.M. (2005, November). *Trends and Determinants of Fertility Rates in OECD countries: The Role of Policies*. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers. p. 41. Retrieved online March 23, 2007 at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/7/33/35304751.pdf>
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 McDougall, J. (2007, February 9). Relationships... and ah-two and ah-three and ah-four: A couple generations ago, half-a-dozen kids in one family was no biggie. These days, three's a crowd. And four? Well, that's just nutty. *Calgary Herald*, p. sw30.

WHO'S PLAYING AROUND NOW?

OVERSCHEDULED PARENTS MEAN OVERSCHEDULED KIDS

by Dave Quist



Remember playing “Hide and Seek” until it was too dark to see – when the only boundaries were the neighbourhood itself? Street hockey tournaments that never really ended and “Monopoly” games that went on for most of the summer? What happened? Many researchers wonder if today’s children are being unnecessarily organized. Did we forget how to play, or did we organize our children’s activities to the point that spontaneity no longer exists?

Research is showing there were benefits to unorganized – and even unsupervised – play and there are reasons why this element of what was once a normal childhood is disappearing. Children are busy, perhaps unsurprisingly, because parents are busy, a trend with detrimental effects on the concept of family time.

On January 10, 2007, the *New York Times* reported that New York City “is on the verge of a bold experiment in

the way children play, one that could accelerate the trend away from monkey bars, swings and seesaws used by generations of city children.”¹ The concept involves the use of “trained play workers” who will assist children play with a new playground that is designed to trigger their imagination. This raises all kinds of questions: Do children need to be taught how to use their imagination at a playground?

Dr. Lisa Sutherland from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) has studied the activity level of children and determined that they are 13 per cent less active now than they were in the 1980s.² In fact this trend started in the 1970s as researched by the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Centre. Their results indicated that “since the 1970s children have lost 12 hours per week in free time, which includes a 25-per-cent drop in play and a 50-per-cent drop in unstructured outdoor activities.”³

Too safety conscious?

A culture of lawsuits has created a nation of protectors, rather than adventurers. Sergio Pellis, a neuroscience researcher at the University of Lethbridge, has recently completed a study of rats and their natural activity and play. His conclusion is that “[h]orseplay and roughhousing on the playground, often a contentious issue for school boards and families, enhances emotional and peer development.” He continues by saying, “Rough-and-tumble play is a crucial childhood experience. . . . If adults don’t allow this rough-and-tumble play, they run the risk that a child might be undeveloped from being denied the opportunity to develop important social skills.”²⁴

Jane Vallentyne, associate professor of physical education and recreation at the University of Alberta, agrees, stating that “horseplay is an essential part of a child’s development. Children need to run, climb, chase and flee. That sort of physicality is inherent to our nature. If we put children in a culture of fear by taking away anything that can possibly cause an injury, we are putting our kids at greater risk.”

Maybe our children have learned only too well from their parents. The drop in children’s unstructured play time hasn’t come out of the blue: We see a similar drop in adult – read parents – leisure time. In a recent Statistics Canada report, researcher Martin Turcotte found that workers are spending less time now with their families than they did 20 years ago. “In 1986, workers spent, on average, 4.2 hours, or 250 minutes, engaged in various activities with their spouse, their children or other family members. Nearly 20 years later, by 2005, this average number of hours had dropped to 3.4 hours, or 206 minutes, an average decline of about 45 minutes.”²⁵ Of interest in this study is that workers were not spending this time at work or with co-workers, but rather spending more time alone.

In short, we can ask whether kids are so busy because their parents are. And if parents are the ones who are too busy, perhaps the children are registered in a myriad of organized activities because Mom and Dad don’t have the time in their schedule to spend with them.

Quality time versus quantity time

And what do children think of this phenomenon? Ron Taffel, a therapist and observer of youth culture has interviewed children aged preschool to the 6TH grade. His results are striking, indicating that the “one wish expressed by every child was that their parents spend more time with them.”²⁶

The idea of quality time is pervasive: We often hear that parents are spending quality time with their children. Taffel’s research shows that children simply want our time.

While “quality time” set aside with our children for special events is important, whether it be a fishing trip, participation in a cultural event or reading a story together, there is also a distinct need on the part of both children

and parents just to be together. We might call that “quantity time.” Just being in each other’s company provides many benefits. There are teaching moments when we wash the dishes or rake leaves together. We teach our children life skills as we shop for groceries or clean the basement together. Our children will become accustomed to sharing their day’s highlights, and lowlights, if there is enough time to share together.

The problem in freeing up a child’s time may lie in analyzing the root of the problem in parental schedules. If children need to be “unscheduled” it’s because we need to set the appropriate example ourselves.

Options to consider

So what can we do? Children need our time and attention on a regular, day-to-day basis. This is a tall order for many parents, and single parents have an even bigger challenge in this area.

Perhaps more than anything, as parents we need to be sure that we have our priorities in order. Yes, jobs and careers are demanding, but with our last breath, it’s unlikely we’ll declare “I sure wish I had spent more time on the job.” Seasons of life have always been busy or slow, whether it was our forefathers planting and harvesting or completing the office budget before the deadline. That said, today we often attempt to maintain a more frenetic pace on a regular basis, only to have one of the juggling balls hit the ground.

Naturally, there are benefits in organized sports, music lessons and the like for children. But children also need time to interact with each other on a more informal basis and even spend some time alone, processing life’s events. Playdates may be a great idea, but let’s not organize every moment of our children’s activities. Allow them to be engaged in free-thinking, stimulating and creative activities that involve their imagination and the resources they have at hand and encourage them to use their imagination, whether it is outdoors or indoors, in small groups or large. The challenges that they address and overcome will serve them well in the long term.

As parents, we want our children to experience life at its best, to be successful, to avoid the hurts that we experienced as children. But it is also life’s challenges that shape children in preparation for adulthood. Research tells us kids need time to play and the presence of their parents. Children grow up fast enough – parents shouldn’t miss out on the joys of parenting by rushing our children from activity to activity – in effect, by rushing them through their childhood.

endnotes

- 1 Cardwell, D. (2007, January 10) New York tries to think outside the sandbox. *New York Times*, p. 1
- 2 Wooding, S. (2005). *The Parenting Crisis*. Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, p. 195.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 Tetley, D. (2007, March 21). Horsing around ‘crucial’ to child’s development. *Calgary Herald*, p. B3.
- 5 Statistics Canada (2007, February 13). *Canadian Social Trends*. Catalogue no. 11-008.
- 6 LeFebvre, J. E. (2005) *Over Scheduled Kids*. Retrieved April 30, 2007 from <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/pp/pdf/oversch.pdf>

THE JOYS OF CAREGIVING

CARING FOR AGING LOVED ONES NEED NOT BE A CRISIS

by Caroline Tapp-McDougall



A friend is 83 years old and his eyes are beginning to fail him. He refuses to stop driving even though we've suggested that he's no longer safe on the road. A month ago, as he was driving to the drugstore to pick up some medicine, he drove through a stop sign and nearly struck a pedestrian. After a chat with the family doctor, his license was suspended. Now, family members find themselves driving him everywhere. It's really-time consuming, and he's not happy.

Eldercare and its inherent responsibilities are the new facts of life for the invincible baby boomers. For 70 per cent of Canadians aged 30-60 today, looking after a parent is a reality – many of our elders are living approximately one-third longer than previous generations.¹ Many social researchers predict that caring for family members will be one of the most significant issues affecting family life over the next few decades. For so many individuals, their parents' and their own golden years will arrive like a storm, bringing inherent disruptions to daily life and work. This need not be the case.

A sudden crisis and the need for emergency planning will rack up financial and emotional costs quite quickly. The solution? Early research and planning for both short- and long-term eldercare needs. In the end, some sons and daughters decide to leave work and stay home to provide care. Others hire outside help. Each situation is as different as the people involved.

Accepting the challenge

Whether its roll-up-your-sleeves daily care or long-distance hands-off management, each family's eldercare situation will be different. If we choose to care, the common factor is that daily life becomes harder to juggle. However, with the right approach, it is possible to find joy in caregiving and still enjoy time spent with older loved ones. Learning the ropes and navigating through health, rehab and lifestyle options will become an adult child's new pastime—and, unfortunately, their stress barometer.

Caring at home

Most older adults prefer to remain at home alone, yet their ability to be independent and the type of assistance they need, and agree to, will change over time. Assessing a

THE FACTS ON CAREGIVING

Over **1.7 million** adults aged 45 to 64 provide informal care to almost **2.3 million** seniors with long-term disabilities or physical limitations. • Three-quarters of hours spent assisting seniors are by family members. • **70 per cent** of informal caregivers are also employed in the labour market. • Median hours per week spent by caregivers is two with women spending three hours and men spending **1.6** hours. • **44 per cent** of female caregivers and **27 per cent** of male caregivers are classified as high-intensity caregivers. • **53 per cent** of employed high-intensity female caregivers and **44 per cent** of male caregivers believe flex-time at work would help ease their burden. • Caregivers consistently have higher life satisfaction ratings than non-caregivers.

SOURCE: Statistics Canada

senior's needs can be a hard and subjective task, especially when the older person resists care. Nonetheless, examining activity levels and watching for poor eating habits, declining mobility, forgetfulness or poor personal hygiene are good places to start. For example, what happens if a neighbour living alone falls? In this case, encouraging the person to obtain a personal emergency response system (PERS), which can be programmed to call for help in the case of a fall or another emergency, can be a lifesaver.

“Are they living ‘at risk’?”

When assessing, a caregiver can ask, “Is your elder able to answer the door, stay alone, or manage cooking, shopping or driving?” Is the senior unsteady on his or her feet and reluctant to use a walker? Is forgetting to turn off the stove or lock the door an issue? Sometimes a simple solution, such as a home-support worker to help Mom with bathing or to drive Dad to the doctor can be helpful. Other times, a referral to an adult daycare program will be needed.

Each province and territory has a home-care program that can be accessed through the family doctor, and this is a good place to start looking for help. Occupational therapists are another great resource for evaluating home safety. (Remember, most falls occur in the bathroom.) And geriatric care managers (often privately paid), social workers and hospital discharge planners are others sources of knowledge and referrals.

Balancing responsibilities

As the number of us reaching the age of 65 will more than double over the next 20 years,² there will be increased absenteeism for family reasons and higher levels of personal stress at work. Employers will worry that we'll come to work with our parents' needs on our mind or face on-the-job interruptions with calls from elders. We'll need time off for caregiving and for our own medical conditions related to caregiver fatigue and depression. To keep working well, we'll need to find ways to ask for employment packages with accommodations that will allow us to care while staying on the payroll.³

Staying on the job

Fortunately, many employers are recognizing the value of keeping skilled employees on the job. (Providing for family caregivers is an emerging trend in the workplace.) Ideas that have worked well are lunch-and-learn sessions on eldercare and caregiving, and the formation of caregiver support groups at work. Some innovative companies have even opened adult daycare centres where employees can drop off their parents for the day, just like they do with their children.

Avoiding burnout

There's much at stake as families land in what's called the “eldercare gap”: The white space where we struggle and need help. In crisis mode, the downtime and instability are costly, and quality of care may be compromised. In stable mode, long-term care for parents over time includes the risk of burnout, resignation and on-the-job personal injury. To avoid burnout, eat well and get physically active. By building your physical and emotional strength, you'll be strong and clear-headed enough to battle negative thoughts and to be able to take charge. Find ways to think ahead, scout out available resources, and recognize and understand your elder's wishes. The caregiving journey – and your family life – will be that much smoother.

sources

- 1 Romanow, R. (2002). Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada. Retrieved February 20, 2007 from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/care/romanow/hcc0086.html>
- 2 Statistics Canada. (February 2007.) A portrait of seniors in Canada. p. 152-169. Catalogue No. 89-519-XIE
- 3 Pyper, W. (November 2006). Balancing career and care. *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 7, No. 1. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

WORKPLACE WARNING CALL

You may have eldercare issues if you are

- taking extra personal phone calls related to elders
- not completing or decreasing the quality of your work
- unwilling to work overtime or handle business travel
- calling in sick or taking time off to provide support or care
- being late or adjusting schedules without notice
- distracted (and therefore at risk of on-the-job injury)
- unable to accept extra projects or new assignments
- avoiding issues at work
- requesting reduced hours when work is busy
- feel worn out, depressed or tense

SURVIVING ELDERCARE

Check out these 10 eldercare survival tips that'll improve your stamina and make things easier for you:

1. **Play the hand you're dealt:** Accept the fact that your parent needs you and decide whether you intend to be there for him or her. Come to terms with your situation and strive to make the best of it.
2. **Think positive:** Never underestimate the power of a positive outlook. Listen to yourself to catch negative comments. Things won't seem so desperate when you look to the brighter side.
3. **Make things happen:** Refuse to let your present situation wreak havoc for the rest of your life. Initiate changes for the better.
4. **Set goals:** Be realistic and clear about what needs to be done and what you can manage. Set goals in conjunction with your parents and health-care professionals.
5. **Prioritize:** Decide what's important and how much time you're prepared to spend on each area of your life. Choose whether your role is to achieve short-term stability in your parents' life or to accept a longer-term and more significant caregiving role.
6. **Ask for help:** Don't do it all yourself. Sharing caring responsibilities with family members or health-care professionals will reduce the load.
7. **Overcome your fear:** Sudden responsibilities can be draining and may require new skills. Try not to be overwhelmed. Be organized, take one step at a time, and recognize and respect your parents' rights, including the right to live at risk.
8. **Be good to yourself:** Treat yourself well and you'll have the inner strength to better care for others. This includes taking respite, fitness and wellness breaks.
9. **Watch what you eat and respect your body:** Ensure your body is up to the task. Remember to eat three balanced meals a day, including five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Also, drink eight to 10 glasses of water a day and be sensible with alcohol.
10. **Live for today:** Don't sap your energy fretting about your parents' loss of strength, independence or vitality. Put your energy into finding new ways to enjoy each day.

UNPROTECTED: A CAMPUS PSYCHIATRIST REVEALS HOW POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN HER PROFESSION ENDANGERS EVERY STUDENT

ANONYMOUS, M.D. (2006). NEW YORK: SENTINEL.

Unprotected is an anonymous M.D.'s personal account of her experience counselling university students on campuses where university health centres and the mental health profession are placing political correctness before students' health. The author originally published the book anonymously for fear that she would be ostracized by professionals in the mental health world for her political incorrectness, but later revealed her identity. Dr. Miriam Grossman, a campus psychiatrist at UCLA, is now public and she says, "the physical and emotional harm of the anything-goes mentality, the devastating consequences of abortion, hook-ups, and STDs – are not politically correct."

The book tells the tale of 10 students. Stacey is cutting her wrists, Olivia is vomiting up to six times a day and Kelly is depressed. Although her patients struggle with different problems, this M.D. thinks there is something tying them all together—their sexual lifestyles. What a "non-judgmental" health professional may overlook is that Stacey started cutting

again after she found out she contracted HPV and Olivia's bulimia relapsed after she broke up with her "friend with benefits" – a concept whereby young people are involved sexually without commitment – and the first boy she had ever been intimate with. And Kelly started feeling depressed again after an abortion last summer. Is this just coincidence? This M.D. doesn't think so. And yet, she says, her hands are tied.

Dr. Grossman says her profession refuses to discuss problems that are politically incorrect. In fact, she believes that her profession has been "hijacked" by a "radical activism" that insists that promiscuity, casual sex and risky fringe behaviours are "healthy."

The author concludes that today's "ideologically-driven" campus health services are omitting information on the consequences of students' "sexual choices," putting them at risk physically, emotionally and spiritually. "Isn't it time we forgot the Left and the Right and just told it like it is?" That's a question she asks – and it's about time.

THE PARENTING CRISIS

WOODING, SCOTT (2005) MARKHAM: FITZHENRY AND WHITESIDE.

There's no doubt where educational psychologist Dr. Scott Wooding stands on difficult parenting issues. Liberal divorce policy, media saturation, poor child discipline practices and the loss of moral guidance in schools: He tackles them all head-on as stressors in our modern society that harm children. The psychologist is not afraid of tough topics and uncomfortable answers: He even criticizes "quality" daycare, and asserts that good parents would do best to live with less and spend more time with their children.

Wooding focuses on the shift in values in North American culture over the last few decades. In particular he identifies several trends that have hurt families including the devaluation of motherhood, an increasingly long work week and the thirst for affluence. He argues that these cultural values have had a harmful impact on children as they receive less time and

attention from parents. This values shift is at the heart of the parenting crisis.

Wooding also reviews common parenting mistakes and evaluates several approaches. He offers practical suggestions such as clearly setting rules that are reviewed annually and adjusted as children mature and gain greater responsibility. Occasionally, Wooding engages in generalizations that might prove distracting for some readers, such as his conclusion that professional athletes' salaries breed over-competitive hockey parents. Generally, however, Wooding's practical directions make this book a thoughtful tool. Well-researched, sourcing Canadian and international data, it's readable prose that is sure to provoke discussion among Canadian families.

MARRIAGE AND CASTE IN AMERICA: SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL FAMILIES IN A POST-MARITAL AGE

KAY S. HYMOWITZ (2006) CHICAGO: IVAN R. DEE.

Kay Hymowitz is a myth buster. No, she isn't featured on the Discovery Channel television series that exposes urban myths and movie stunts—she's a policy wonk's myth buster. The senior fellow at the New York City-based Manhattan Institute takes on widely accepted social assumptions about the nature of poverty. Hymowitz's new book, *Marriage and Caste in America*, states that marriage breakdown is turning the United States "into a nation of separate and unequal families." On the one side are single-parent, low-income families, who flounder at or below poverty levels. And on the other side of town are two-married-parent, middle-class families, who flourish.

Many social policies have been created around the mistaken assumption that poverty-stricken families simply need increased access to contraception, education and jobs to break free and awaken an inherent middle-class "soul." People who create these policies assume that the troubling patterns of teen pregnancy and fatherlessness either result in poverty or are caused by poverty. Hymowitz offers an alternative perspective: She suggests

that the two-married-parent family provides developmental advantages to children and instills skills and a life model for success. The author writes, "As the core cultural institution, marriage orders life in ways we only dimly understand. It carries with it signals about how we should live, signals that are in line with both our economy and our politics in the largest sense."

Ever optimistic, Hymowitz suggests that young people today value family life and are showing greater interest in civil responsibility. Despite the cry of yesterday's feminist movement to abolish marriage and motherhood, young women today continue to strive for equality while marrying and raising children. And the institution of marriage continues to help them order their lives.

Challenging prevailing philosophies and ideologies, Hymowitz's style is both comfortable and provocative. The author recognizes that the restoration of marriage among the poor will not solve the poverty problem, but in 167 pages Hymowitz delivers a challenge to accepted wisdom worthy of serious consideration.

THE BOOMER FACTOR

REGINALD W. BIBBY (2006) BASTIAN BOOKS

Did you know numbers can tell a story? Dr. Reginald Bibby, no stranger to tracking Canadian social trends, manages to write interesting stories using Canadian social statistics. He's an old pro; he's been doing it for the past 30 years.

In his latest book, *The Boomer Factor*, Bibby identifies six boomer trends that are changing: Pluralism, Individualism, Performance Expectations, Consumption, Time Expectations and the Information Explosion. He juxtaposes these with four unchanging areas, which include: What People Want, Civility, Family Aspirations and Religion and Spirituality.

Canada's baby-boomers were born between 1946 and 1965. In 1991, this group made up one-third of Canada's population — the largest single demographic group ever seen in Canadian history. The oldest of this age group has already begun to enter retirement and if "Freedom 55" holds true, many more will enter retirement very soon.

Bibby profiles this group and breaks down some of the myths commonly held in our society. One of these is the misconception that religion is dead. In fact, Bibby's research shows that while traditional church attendance has dropped by two-thirds in the past 55 years, a solid majority of Canadians continue to believe in God, life after death, Heaven and angels. Not everyone will agree with every thought — Bibby explains that "... good family life can take on many different forms," and "... religion — it seems to me — is positioned to contribute positively to our individual and collective life."

Yet the depth of the profile provides important information — for politicians, policy bureaucrats, social welfare groups, churches and business leaders — Bibby's snapshot of society offers significant insight into the issues affecting their stakeholders. And agree or disagree, Bibby's past observations have proven above all to be accurate — Bibby's numbers aren't just telling tall tales.

EUROPE'S FAMILY TOMES

by Andrea Mrozek

What encourages good family life? Good social programs? Perhaps a nearby daycare centre? These are just some questions Europe and Canada are asking because of low fertility rates. For industrialized nations the replacement fertility rate is 2.1 births per woman, in Canada it is 1.5. Governments tend to look for solutions within themselves. But if demographic decline goes hand-in-hand with economic decline, then new state-run measures – daycare centres and other assorted programs – may be the cause, not the solution, of dwindling populations.

France, Ireland and the United States are among the very few Western countries to achieve a replacement fertility rate – each having enough babies to maintain population levels. How they do so differs – France offers extended maternity leaves and daycare (they also have immigration from countries with high fertility rates); the other two have lower taxes and fewer social programs. What causes a country to have slightly more robust fertility rates, in the West at least, remains somewhat of a mystery.

This didn't stop *Der Spiegel*, a trendy German magazine, from examining family policy for a cover story and concluding the fatherland's dwindling fertility rate of 1.3 is the result of government money – spent in the wrong places. The German state is spending on traditional families, which, the authors assert, no longer exist. If Berlin would only re-direct government funds to single parents and dual-income families – ensuring moms can work – well, then perhaps Germans would have more kids and avoid a demographic implosion and the corresponding economic slowdown.

Der Spiegel might be right about Germany's traditional family disappearing. Marriage rates are fairly low. Still, it is inaccurate to argue that non-traditional unions have picked up the slack. The article's title, "The gold-plated cage: How the state keeps women away from their careers – and in spite of this, no more children are born," sums up the bias. The thesis: When women are free to work and do what they really want they will have more children. This includes freedom from the cage of stay-at-home motherhood. The secret is to offer generous social services, lots of daycare and no stigma – women will have more kids provided they can also work – whether that be behind the counter at a restaurant, in an assembly line, or in the executive suite of the office tower. Forget Ireland and America, freedom in mainland Europe is state-funded.

Freedom is important to childrearing. Russia and the countries once under Moscow's Communist rule in Eastern Europe have some of the lowest birth rates around. "Freedom" there means the abortion rate is higher than live births. Yet most mothers tell public-opinion pollsters they would like to have more chil-

dren – not fewer. *Der Spiegel* skips over the inconvenient argument that high taxes limit freedom and instead concludes more government funding is what is needed. But if this is true, why hasn't it worked so far?

The German state is über-involved in families and has been for quite some time. Germany already spends more on family benefits and daycare than the average Western nation—three per cent of GDP (above the OECD average of 2.4) on family benefits and over one per cent of GDP on daycare and pre-schools, again, above the OECD average of 0.8 per cent. They are about to spend more. The new family minister, Ursula von der Leyen, wants to create 500,000 daycare spaces by the year 2013. If enacted, this means that one of every three German babies will have their own taxpayer-funded bassinette.

Columnist Mark Steyn has recently written extensively about demographics in *America Alone*, his bestselling book. His concern is that Western nations are failing to reproduce, which is in stark contrast to Islamic nations. He notes, "One should be cautious seeking correlations between social structures and fertility rates. They're falling around the world and no expert knows how to reverse them."

Actually, *everyone* knows how to reverse them – the birds and the bees are not the substance of expert panels. But Steyn did not intend to address the "whys" of depopulation in the West. Others are not so circumspect. The Madrid-based Institute for Family Policies, a new think tank dedicated to tackling family issues in Spain, says that "[e]ach day in Europe, 2,880 children are not born, representing 120 terminations per hour." One in every six pregnancies in Europe ends in abortion, which can be better contextualized, when one considers that "[e]ach day in Europe, two schools are closed due to insufficient numbers of children."

So what does increase family size, strength and freedom? It's fair to say we have few solid answers, especially when it comes to tax policy and government funding. We should avoid sweeping generalizations on the whys of population decline. But as Canadians we should also avoid turning to Europe as an example. Right now Germany, like most of Europe, is spending money like water via its bureaucratic taps – if funding creates freedom and fertility, they should have it in spades. Instead, the state is radically involved in individuals' lives and the very highest fertility rate continental Europe sees is merely replacement level – most countries are well below that. But credit where it is due: At least Germany is discussing its population decline. The same can hardly be said of Ottawa.

**HAVE A SEAT.
FRONT AND CENTRE.**

reserved
MARRIAGE

reserved
FAMILY

imfcanada.org

JOIN US IN BRINGING TOP NOTCH RESEARCH TO THE FOREFRONT OF CANADIAN FAMILY POLICY.

We've made it easy for you to partner with us. Visit www.imfcanda.org to learn more about our supporter categories and join today!

SUPPORTER CATEGORIES:

LEVEL	ANNUAL AMOUNT	MIN. MONTHLY GIFT	BENEFIT
Supporter	\$50-\$99	N/A	Free copy of the IMFC Review and notification of all events and research
Friend	\$100-\$349	\$10	All the benefits of Supporter level plus copies of all briefings and reports
Research Club	\$350-\$999	\$30	All the benefits of the Friend level plus a special quarterly report
Executive Club	\$1000-\$4999	\$85	All the benefits of the Research Club plus recordings of all events and invitations to exclusive pre-event receptions
Leaders Club	\$5000-\$9999	\$425	All the benefits of the Executive Club plus invitations to special events with keynote speakers and decision makers.
Visionary Club	\$10,000 or more	\$850	All the benefits of the Leaders club for up to 3 people