

"Is Equality Tearing Families Apart?"

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Let me begin with what I take to be two basic truths. First, social inequality between the sexes should be eliminated. Second, anything that systematically undermines the possibility for healthy, stable, fulfilling family life should be eliminated as well. Put positively, a good society must be *both* pro-equality and pro-family.

On its own, neither position is particularly controversial. Treating women as inferior to men clearly denies them their dignity and moral worth. Insofar as the majority of society's rewards go to men solely because of their sex, women are victims of injustice. Similarly clear intuitions hold with regard to the importance of stable, caring, mutually rewarding marriages and families. Assuming (as I do here) that "married couple" and "family" are understood broadly, as including both traditional and nontraditional household arrangements,⁽¹⁾ what is at issue is one of the most basic forms of social relationships around which individuals build their understanding of the good life. A society that denied its members something that is so widely held to be an essential component of a life worth living would be gravely depriving them. Properly understood, then, a "decline of the family" would pose a genuine threat to human well-being.

My concern here is with the perceived conflict between pro-equality and pro-family approaches. Those who have fought hardest for gender equality often view "pro-family" rhetoric with suspicion and even hostility. And those who have worried most about the decline of the family often view campaigns for gender equality with a similar degree of suspicion and hostility. In this essay, I examine this second set of worries, put forward by a range of social critics and philosophers whom I will label "neotraditionalists."⁽²⁾ I shall be focussing on three ways in which promoting equality is thought to contribute to the disintegration of families. In each case, these neotraditionalist critics argue that the egalitarian policies of feminists entail further social developments -- specifically, genderless parenting, selfish individualism, and competing agendas -- social developments that are tearing families apart. I shall be arguing that this entailment is rarely plausible, and that even when it is, the risks of social fragmentation should not overshadow the importance of gender equality.

Before continuing, a brief clarification is in order with regard to what it means to say that the family is "in decline" or is being "torn apart." I do not mean this as simply a matter of a demographic shift from "intact" families (a couple in their first marriage and their children) to single-parent families and "step-families." Unless one assumes that particular structures for living together are ordained by God or biology, it is an open question whether the increase in single-parent households or common-law marriages represents a problem. What clearly would represent a problem, however, are developments

that threaten to rob family life of its meaning and purpose. If, for example, the very point of families is to provide a context in which family members are nurtured, cared for, socialized, etc., then a lack of contact between family members represents a decline of the family. In this sense, a family can be torn apart even without a divorce. Being torn apart is thus also a matter of degree. Again, however, what would be problematic is not that a particular form of household is on the decline,⁽³⁾ but that people are having trouble maintaining the interpersonal commitments about which they care deeply. On the broad understanding assumed here, the break-up of an unmarried couple can be an instance of family disintegration.

There is mounting evidence that the family is suffering from social fragmentation: half of all marriages end in divorce; "in disrupted families, only one child in six, on average, saw his or her father as often as once a week in the past year";⁽⁴⁾ and "parents had roughly 10 fewer hours per week for their children in 1986 than in 1960."⁽⁵⁾ None of this demonstrates that we should return to the past, but if some degree of stability and integration is a necessary condition for the sort of family life that so many people deeply value, then the criticisms raised by neotraditionalists must be taken seriously.

EQUALITY AND GENDERLESS PARENTING

Neotraditionalist critics of egalitarian feminism sometimes claim that promoting equality involves endorsing the idea of a genderless family in which breadwinning, homemaking, and childrearing are divided evenly between husband and wife.⁽⁶⁾ Neotraditionalists then argue that eliminating distinctions between the role of father and mother forces both men and women to deny essential components of the identity of parents, which is not only bad in itself but also denies families the much-needed stability and complementarity provided by the male breadwinner/female homemaker model.

Arguments for this position come from a wide range of viewpoints. In an unusual convergence with neotraditionalists, some feminists hold up motherhood as the distinctive feature of what it is to be a woman.⁽⁷⁾ The parallel argument is found, for example, in the work of David Blankenhorn, who argues that fatherhood is central to masculinity.⁽⁸⁾ I shall focus on this latter discussion.

Neotraditionalists have taken issue with the ideal of the sensitive, caring, supportive "New Father" who changes half the diapers and whose sense of self-worth depends as much on his homemaking as his breadwinning.⁽⁹⁾ Against this ideal, they argue that it is vitally important to recognize the distinctiveness of a father's contribution to the family, especially as a good provider and a strong protector. According to these critics, recognizing this is important for three reasons.

First, if we eliminate the differences between what it means to be a father and what it means to be a mother, we will lose the benefits of diverse role models within the family. For example, some studies have shown that men tend to inspire adventurousness, assertiveness, and risk-taking in their children, whereas women tend to be more risk-averse and protective. If, as seems plausible, children need to

learn to balance these two modes of behavior, then it would be a genuine loss if this diversity were eliminated.

Second, as with many social organizations, the family benefits from functional differentiation, that is, from having a diversity of roles and functions that complement one another, rather than having everyone performing the same roles. On these grounds, neotraditionalists hold, for example, that children do best in a situation in which the authority figure of the father contrasts with the sympathetic ear of a mother.

Third, neotraditionalists argue that by telling men that they must think of themselves as homemakers, proponents of gender equality exacerbate family disintegration by leaving men feeling that they have nothing special to contribute.⁽¹⁰⁾ Without the feeling of masculine pride that comes from being a good provider and a role model of strength in the family, it is argued, men's attachment to the responsibilities of fatherhood is diminished. And genderless parenting denies men this feeling of pride.

These neotraditionalist arguments all attempt to link genderless parenting to the depletion of crucial resources for healthy families. Though some critics might go so far as to claim that this means we should reinstate the traditional, male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family as the normative model, the more moderate position is that the differences between men and women should be accepted, thereby "allowing" women to choose full-time homemaking without guilt and men to focus on breadwinning without shame.

There are several difficulties with this line of argument. To begin with, it is not entirely clear that promoting equality between men and women requires eliminating the distinctive roles of mothers and fathers. "Genderless" parenting does not deny that there will be role differences ("father" and "mother") but only that parents should not be trapped in one role or the other. Thus one can maintain the diversity of roles on which neotraditionalists insist, while keeping open the question of *who* must fill the roles. Neither of the first two arguments has given us reason to think that men should not be "mothers" nor women be "fathers".

The third argument does aim to provide such reasons. At this point, neotraditionalists often appeal to claims about what is "natural." They reject the idea that men can be "mothers" and women can be "fathers." Given how much of what gives humans their dignity is the ability to refrain from doing "what comes naturally," such direct appeals to nature are generally dubious. Even so, many people are impressed with the purported "brute fact" that women are more emotionally attached to their children, so that they have a much harder time leaving them in the care of others, and are much more reluctant to put young children in child care.⁽¹¹⁾ Assuming, charitably, that there is empirical evidence for a persistent and fairly general trend, would this show what the neotraditionalists want it to show? Not necessarily. For it might turn out that the persistence of this phenomenon may be traceable to inequalities that have much more to do with socialization than with chromosomes.

Consider, for example, Rhona Mahony's suggestion that women's "headstart effect" can be overcome through the use of "affirmative action for fathers."⁽¹²⁾ Mahony acknowledges that pregnancy often

gives mothers an inevitable "headstart" over fathers when it comes to their emotional attachment and sensitive attunement to the infant, but she stresses that what happens after the birth is not biologically predetermined. Typically, of course, mothers' headstart leads to quicker and more successful responses. Even without the greater degree of coaching and encouragement women generally receive from female friends and relatives, the headstart effect can quickly lead to a situation in which mothers are able to quiet a child quickly and fathers feel frustrated by their difficulty living up to the standards of mothers. Even when a couple is resolved to share the parenting, Mahony argues, there are unintentional mechanisms that tend to snowball, so that after only a few months it becomes much more efficient for mothers to take over the greater share of the childcare. This may look like a "natural" outcome, but biology does not determine this outcome beyond the "headstart effect." In fact, if fathers are given long periods of time in which they have sole responsibility for the young infant, there is every reason to expect that such "affirmative action" will correct the balance or possibly even tip it in the other direction. Before large numbers of fathers have had the opportunity to become equally expert with their children, speculation about what men and women "naturally" want is a poor basis for legitimating practices that perpetuate the unequal status of women.

In this connection, we must be very clear about what is at stake for women in the present discussion. Neotraditionalist attempts to restore the idea that women and men have specific roles to play as mothers and fathers threaten to re-entrench the situation in which women who have the primary childcare responsibilities see their chances diminished of later returning to interesting jobs. As recent discussions of "mommy tracks" and "glass ceilings" have made clear, being the primary caregiver for their children often hinders women on the job front, both by restricting the amount of time they can devote to their work and by making them less attractive candidates for being promoted to positions of responsibility.⁽¹³⁾ I shall return to this point below.

EQUAL NEGOTIATING POSITIONS

A second set of neotraditionalist suspicions about the egalitarian agenda regards the destabilizing effects of focussing on equality of power. Here the argument is that, although some equality of power in the family is probably a good thing, it should not become a dominant principle. The family, it is argued, follows a different logic than that of politics or business. It is a place of unconditional love and fidelity, a "haven in a heartless world."⁽¹⁴⁾ This climate of love and trust is destroyed by a focus on equal power and equal negotiating positions.

Neotraditionalists do not advocate inequality. They agree with egalitarians that wives should be equal before the law, should be able to own and inherit property, and (for the most part) should not be required to submit to the wishes of their husbands. What they object to is the stronger position taken by egalitarians.

According to this egalitarian position, genuine equality demands both a commitment to equalizing power imbalances as much as possible and an adequate awareness of one's relative power in the relationship. If we care about equality, we must be concerned with how the choices that spouses make are shaped in subtle ways. Unless the negotiating positions are equal, the appearance of fair decision-making may be easily misleading. Furthermore, and this is the importance of *awareness*,

even if neither spouse perceives a problematic imbalance, that may simply be because some spouses may be in such a vulnerable position that they cannot *afford* to think about their inequalities. ⁽¹⁵⁾

To understand the egalitarian position, it is best to focus on the difficult decisions that families inevitably face, because it is there that subtle differences on a person's negotiating position can have a huge impact. Take the case of young parents making decisions about who will cut back on his or her hours at work (or quit altogether) in order to care for the newborn, when both spouses are in careers that they love but that will be jeopardized if they cut back on work. Equality demands that the interests of each spouse should weigh as much as those of the other (which is not to say that the only fair outcome is a 50/50 split). That requires, in turn, that it is a genuinely open question whether the mother or the father will go part-time to take care of the babies. But if, as is very often the case, the husband's more established career provides a better income or he has little idea how to take care of children by himself, then the wife's negotiating position is seriously weakened. Even if the spouses love each other, this disparity can influence the decision-making. Whether the mother wants to or not, the "obvious" thing to do will be for her to cut back on her hours and thereby jeopardize her career. In this way, even among spouses who love each other, an unequal negotiating position can deny women the opportunity to have their career plans adequately considered.

In a similar way, ensuring equal negotiating positions requires guaranteeing that divorce is not available to one spouse on more advantageous terms. This point is important, because when family conflicts arise, they are played out against the background of the possibility of that the marriage may break down. The possibility of divorce gives partners not only a way of escaping an unacceptable position -- not insignificant in a world of marital rape and spousal abuse -- but also a way of increasing the chances of their criticism being taken seriously. As Albert O. Hirschman observes, "The chances for voice to function effectively as a recuperation mechanism are appreciably strengthened if voice is backed up by the *threat of exit*, whether it is made openly or whether the possibility of exit is merely well understood to be an element in the situation by all concerned." ⁽¹⁶⁾ Thus, the equal availability of an "exit option" may actually serve to *prevent* divorce by ensuring that both men and women have a threat at their disposal that will ensure that their voice gets heard.

Beyond formal access to divorce, it is crucially important that the consequences of divorce are equally costly. Otherwise, the negotiating position of one spouse will be stronger. Currently, men's exit options are generally better than those of women: "income for mothers and children declines on average about 30 percent, while fathers experience a 10 to 15 percent increase in their incomes in the year following the separation." ⁽¹⁷⁾ The causes of this disparity are complex, but they surely include not only lax enforcement of child support payments but also the fact that while fathers were improving their employment position, mothers have often focussed on childcare and housekeeping rather than job experience and networking. Whatever the reasons, however, in this situation of unequal negotiating positions, when the disagreements are intense or the decisions of great consequence, women's awareness that they will be the bigger losers in a divorce can make them willing to tolerate treatment that their husbands would not tolerate. This is a serious form of inequality in their relative negotiating positions.

For neotraditionalists, this egalitarian requirement that couples be vigilant about their relative negotiating positions (and that one work try to establish equal negotiating positions) risks increasing

marital instability, for the more a couple focusses on the equality of their negotiating positions, the more they are likely to undermine the climate of trust, commitment, and self-sacrifice that makes families both stable and worthwhile. From this perspective, when spouses start closely monitoring who is taking advantage of whom or thinking about who will lose out in a divorce, they introduce ways of relating to each other that are antithetical to good marriages (as well as being symptomatic of deeper problems). This is often expressed by saying that the culture of the public world of contracts and self-interest has invaded the private domain of the family, where a distinctive culture is to be cherished.

The goals of women (and of men, too) in the workplace are primarily individualistic: social recognition, wages, opportunities for advancement, and self-fulfillment. But the family is about collective goals that by definition extend beyond individuals: procreation, socializing the young, caring for the old, and building life's most enduring bonds of affection, nurturance, mutual support, and long-term commitment."⁽¹⁸⁾

Without this commitment to the larger whole, it is argued, families lack the glue that holds them together, and they tend to disintegrate as soon as sacrifices are required. On this view, if family members are focussed on making sure that they get their share, they will have trouble weathering the short-term conflicts that inevitably arise.

But does equalizing negotiating positions between spouses really lead to the sort of self-interested culture that tears families apart? Ultimately, this is an empirical question, but given the complexity of the issue and the sort of data needed, some philosophical analysis may help to clarify which hypotheses are most plausible. The answer to this question will certainly depend, in part, on the sorts of families that one has in mind. Here we can distinguish three different cases.

(1) In some families, the negotiating positions will be roughly equal. When spouses must make choices that jeopardize their chances of career advancement and financial independence in the future, the sacrifices are made equally; various arrangements are in place to ensure that neither spouse will end up benefitting financially from a divorce; and, when applicable, child care responsibilities are distributed in a way that their emotional investment in the children and expertise in childcare is likely to be fairly decided on an equal basis. (This last point is important: if a father has a much easier time losing custody of his children in a divorce, this can make the mother relatively vulnerable in negotiations.) In such cases, an awareness of their equal negotiating positions seems likely to strengthen the stability of the family, for spouses will know that *even when they are not getting along*, they are not in a position to take advantage of the other. Of course, equality of negotiating positions is not sufficient to hold a marriage together, but there is no reason to think that if a couple knows that their interests are balanced, this will threaten their mutual love.

(2) In families where inequalities of power are actually exploited, the different issue arises as to whether keeping the family together is really the best option. I said at the outset that family disintegration is *usually* something that no one wants, and it is bad for that reason -- but not always. If we care about human dignity and autonomy, we must recognize that only if people are aware of the possibility of inequality arising in a relationship will they have any chance of correcting a situation in which someone is taking advantage of them. In a family with young children, of course, the choice to

end a marriage often represents a tragic situation, and neotraditionalists are right to point out that parents may have an obligation to accept some sacrifices for the sake of a maintaining a tense but stable situation at home. But a situation in which it was typically *women* who made the sacrifices would be a situation of indirect sexism and would deserve moral condemnation.

(3) The neotraditionalist objection is perhaps on its best footing in cases in which there are unequal negotiating positions, but the more powerful spouse does not exploit the other. If the power imbalance is *temporary* -- say, if one parent loses a job -- then it may well be just a matter of family members needing to take the long view and to trust that advantages will balance out over time. In a situation of lasting and structural inequality, matters may also seem benign, as long as both spouses feel that they have an equal say. An insistence that spouses be aware of the imbalance may then seem unnecessarily risky to the relationship. As long as we are talking about *adequate* and not *maximal* awareness of relative negotiating positions, however, the greater danger, I would suggest, lies in being blind to the presence of serious inequality. For an awareness of it allows both spouses to be attentive to the ways in which they may inadvertently slide into patterns that they would not have accepted if their negotiating positions had been equal. Furthermore, only with an awareness of such imbalances is it possible for spouses to make a moral appeal to each other based on a special vulnerability, which itself can contribute to marital stability.

This last point can be generalized. If neotraditionalists are concerned with genuine stability in a relationship, they would do well to acknowledge the ways in which genuine equality provides a basis that is at least as stable as the reliance on traditional family models. To ensure that the stability is more than skin-deep conventionalism, some awareness of and concern with spouses relative negotiating positions is vitally important.

EQUALITY OF INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITY

The third neotraditionalist criticism that I wish to consider focusses, like the one just discussed, on the threat that increasing individualism poses to the family. The central suspicion is that feminist egalitarianism undermines the stability of families by allowing the centrifugal forces of the labor market to affect the family more brutally than ever before. Neotraditionalists suggest that, in the push for women's equality, traditional assumptions about the family have been dismantled, taking with them one of the best bulwarks against the divisive demands of the labor market.

In order to examine this claim, we need to understand something of the importance of freedom of choice, especially with regard to the choice of occupation. Historically, the process of industrialization has led to fundamental transformations of family life, for example, in nineteenth-century Europe.⁽¹⁹⁾ Whereas the vast majority of people in pre-industrial societies had no choice of occupation (to the point that their role, usually as peasant, was prescribed by the metaphysical world order), in modern industrial societies the possibilities for choice expanded both in scope and significance. The modern view emerged that free choice of occupation is an important basic liberty, one that guaranteed the opportunity for self-realization. Freedom of choice -- and particularly freedom to choose one's occupation -- thus became a fundamentally important moral claim of modern individuals. What is at issue is the very possibility of leading one's life as one's own. Only if people

could choose their line of work could they truly be free to develop their own sense of individual identity and self-worth.

Women were, of course, long denied this freedom. Men planned their careers, and women planned their weddings. Insofar as that is still the case, promoting equality will indeed demand that the roles available to women be expanded so as to be equal with that of men. As a general proposition, few would deny that women have an equal moral claim to the possibilities for self-determination and self-realization as men. What feminists have shown, however, is that developing the social conditions under which this is a reality calls for significant transformations. In particular, it involves eliminating the automatic assumption that women will be the ones staying home to care for small children. For as long as employers have reason to believe that young women are more likely to leave the work force (or request a shift to a part-time position), decline positions that require overtime or travel, and take time off to care for a sick relative, employers have significant economic incentives to invest in training and promoting men rather than women, thus reducing women's opportunities for self-realization.⁽²⁰⁾ Rectifying this situation is not, it should be noted, a matter of making special accommodations to women but of realizing more consistently the principles of a free labor market.⁽²¹⁾

As neotraditionalists point out, however, the labor market does not operate on the basis of family-friendly principles.⁽²²⁾ Especially in a world in which global competition is intense and labor unions are relatively weak, the labor market often demands, for example, that workers relocate to find work and that they put in extra hours if they are to remain competitive. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck follows out this line of thought to its logical extreme:

Ultimately, the market model of modernity presupposes a society without families or marriages. Everyone must be free and independent for the requirements of the market, in order to secure his or her existence.... Accordingly, a fully realized market society is also a society without children -- unless the children grow up with mobile, single-parent fathers and mothers.⁽²³⁾

Given this, even some feminists have recently discussed the costs to women (and their families) of their entry into the labor market, even if it is something that equality demands.⁽²⁴⁾ Neotraditionalists tend to blame these costs on feminists' campaign for equal opportunity. But it seems far more accurate to say, as Beck does, that this transformation was a matter of artificial barriers to women's participation in the workplace finally being removed.

Whatever the cause, having both men and women in the labor market has added strains on the family as a result of the increasing number of difficult decisions that must be made. The more options people have, the more complicated the task becomes of trying to coordinate cooperative relationships. As a result of the constant demands to communicate needs and arrive at agreements, the potential for conflict rises dramatically. Take the case of being relocated for a job. In a world in which tradition clearly dictates that the family will move wherever the father's job takes him, no decision really needs to be made. There may still be unhappiness and conflict about the move, but the source of the conflict is situated outside the family. As those traditional assumptions crumble, it becomes a contingent matter how families should resolve such situations. Simple appeals to "how we have always done

things" must be replaced by the hard work of finding a way to take everyone's needs into consideration. As a result, to quote Beck again, "The family becomes a constant juggling act of disparate multiple ambitions among careers and their requirements for mobility, educational demands, conflicting parental obligations, and bothersome housework."⁽²⁵⁾ If this is what women's equality of opportunity brings us, neotraditionalists ask, is it really worth it?

With regard to what women's full participation in the labor market has *taken away*, the critics argue that given how promoting equality involves challenging traditional assumptions about how parental responsibilities will be divided, the egalitarian agenda may be undermining the very bulwark that it needs against the centrifugal pressures of the labor market. When women did not insist on working outside the home, they argue, family stability was less threatened by employers demands for mobility, because the pressures were again construed as lying *outside the private sphere of the family*. On this view, the head of household faced the competitive, interest-based public world, but came home to a world free of competing agendas. Furthermore, the traditional family model also provided clear roles and expectations, such that much less was open to the sort of debates that can tear families apart.

The difficulties with this neotraditionalist line of argument lie both in what it advocates and what it fails to advocate. On the first count, the neotraditionalist proposal that we restore our faith in certain traditional assumptions about the family -- such as the model of men as family providers -- is not really an option available in modern industrial societies. Aside from the fact that returning to more traditional approaches would involve unconscionably disproportionate sacrifices from women, it would not actually eliminate the need to make complex and conflict-ridden decisions. Once "how we do things" has become a contingent matter, every form of traditionalism is a *neotraditionalism*. You have to argue for it, or at least choose it. Today, when a couple picks the traditional male-breadwinner/female-homemaker pattern, the modern understanding of mutual and just respect demands that it be a *choice* made by *equals* -- and that it be done in a way that does not jeopardize future possibilities for self-determination.

What neotraditionalists overlook are the posttraditional alternatives. Since industrial societies have been based on the assumption that only half of the potential work force would participate, it is not really all that surprising that fundamental changes are needed as part of the shift to genuinely full employment (that is, of both men and women). There are numerous proposals regarding *structural changes* that can be made in the way in which homemaking and breadwinning are distributed.⁽²⁶⁾ For example, some have proposed policies that would enable couples to participate effectively in the labor market *as couples*.⁽²⁷⁾

Much of the appeal of the call for retraditionalization is based on the assumption that people will necessarily be overwhelmed by the complexities of a world without traditional gender roles. Talk of "disorientation" is common here. Such talk is premature, however. With the appropriate support, there is clearly room to increase people's capacities to handle these complex new decisions, not simply as individuals but also as families, concerned with their well-being as families. If families are to find their way through the inevitable conflicts, they will need a wide array of skills, virtues, and practices that must be developed and sustained themselves. These include, for example, capacities to listen sympathetically and express oneself clearly, commitments to ensuring that no one is

inadvertently silenced and that even unconventional solutions are given due consideration, and clearly established (but revisable) procedures for family deliberations. This could empower individuals to build and maintain their families amidst growing complexity.

Although providing a full blueprint for change is beyond the scope of the present essay, these brief sketches serve to highlight the possibilities for responding effectively to contemporary challenges to family stability without having to follow the neotraditionalists in compromising a commitment to equality.

There is no denying the difficulties involved in keeping a family together today, and many of these challenges result partly from the increasing equality of men and women. But it would be a narrow-minded mistake to say that the current challenges are generated by demands for gender equality. Rather, they are part of the larger challenge posed by living in a world in which the artificial constraints of tradition and conventions are increasingly dissolving. What I have argued here is that, as we face these challenges, neotraditionalism only presents us with a false dichotomy between genuine gender equality and a supportive climate for stable family life. Critics of feminist egalitarianism would have us choose between pro-family and pro-equality positions. Fortunately, even in complex modern societies, that is one decision that no one has to make. ⁽²⁸⁾

ENDNOTES

1. ¹ In "Of Mothers and Families, Men and Sex" (in the present anthology), Marilyn Friedman provides a suitably broad definition of "family" as an "enduring household based on interpersonal commitment," which rightly includes homosexual couples. I shall focus on heterosexual couples, however, since I am concerned with gender equality and thus on relations between men and women.
2. ² In this essay, "neotraditionalism" represents a composite portrait of positions defended by a wide range of authors, most typically by the members of The Council on Families in America and the Institute for American Values. See the essays collected in *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, ed. David Blankenhorn, Steven Bayme, and Jean Bethke Elshtain (Milwaukee, WI: Family Service America, 1990); and *Promises to Keep: Decline and Renewal of Marriage in America*, ed. David Popenoe, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and David Blankenhorn (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996). Although the positions I outline are typical of this approach, my concern here is with widely held viewpoints rather than the claims of particular authors.
3. ³ After all, social critics in the past decried the breakdown of the extended family and the rise of the nuclear family.
4. ⁴ Barbara Defoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1993), 65.
5. ⁵ Janet Z. Giele, "Decline of the Family: Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Views," in Popenoe (ed.), *Promises to Keep*, 91.
6. ⁶ E.g., Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

7. ⁷. E.g., Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and Virginia Held, "Feminism and Moral Theory," in *Women and Moral Theory*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987), 111-28.
8. ⁸. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
9. ⁹. In addition to Blankenhorn's *Fatherless America*, see Bruno Bettelheim's earlier piece, "Fathers Shouldn't Try to Be Mothers," *Parents Magazine*, October, 1956.
10. ¹⁰. This is the main theme of Blankenhorn's *Fatherless America*. It is also a prominent message in various recent "men's movements," including the "Promise-Keepers" and the Nation of Islam's "Million Man March."
11. ¹¹. Rhona Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves: Breadwinning, Babies, and Bargaining Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 107-9. For a contrasting approach, which views the greater attachment of mothers as a fact of "genetic wiring," see Danielle Crittenden, "Yes, Motherhood Lowers Pay," *The New York Times*, op. ed. page, August 22, 1995.
12. ¹². Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves*, 102-6. It should be noted that the biological headstart effect is absent in the case of adoptive mothers.
13. ¹³. See, e.g., Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves*, 14-17.
14. ¹⁴. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
15. ¹⁵. See Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, ch. 7; and Laura Sanchez and Emily W. Kane, "Women's and Men's Constructions of Perceptions of Housework Fairness," *Journal of Family Issues* 17 (1996): 358-87.
16. ¹⁶. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organization, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 82.
17. ¹⁷. Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," 62. See also Lenore J. Weitzman, *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1985). For a discussion of how this affects women's negotiating position, see Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves*, ch. 3. It should be noted that different issues affect the very poor: insofar as welfare assistance is restricted to unmarried mothers, the breakdown of a marriage may leave men with even fewer resources than women (with custody).
18. ¹⁸. David Blankenhorn, "American Family Dilemmas," in Blankenhorn (ed.), *Rebuilding the Nest*, 10f.

19. ¹⁹. For an excellent analysis of this development, see Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, "Auf dem Weg in die postfamiliale Familie: Von der Notgemeinschaft zur Wahlverwandtschaft," in *Riskante Freiheiten: Individualisierung in modernen Gesellschaften*, ed. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994), 115-38.
20. ²⁰. Felice N. Schwartz makes clear what it currently costs companies to ensure that mothers make their way into the executive ranks in "Management Women and the New Facts of Life," *Harvard Business Review* (Jan./Feb. 1989).
21. ²¹. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992), 176-81.
22. ²². Robert N. Bellah, "The Invasion of the Money World," in *Rebuilding the Nest*, 227.
23. ²³. Beck, *Risk Society*, 191.
24. ²⁴. Even feminists such as Judith Stacey have expressed concerns here: "Feminist enthusiasm for female autonomy encouraged women's massive entry into the postindustrial labor market. This, in turn, abetted the corporate deunionization strategies that have accompanied the reorganization of the U.S. economy" [Stacey, *Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 12f.].
25. ²⁵. Beck, *Risk Society*, 184.
26. ²⁶. E.g., Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, ch. 8; and Mahony, *Kidding Ourselves*, ch. 9-10. Neotraditionalists make some of these proposals themselves but see structural change as far from sufficient to counter the pressures towards social fragmentation: see, esp., The Council on Families in America, "Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation," in Popenoe (ed.), *Promises to Keep*, 310.
27. ²⁷. Beck, *Risk Society*, 194-204.
28. ²⁸. I would like to thank Larry May, Pauline Kleingeld, Herbert Anderson, and Don Browning for comments on earlier drafts.