

Family life conference planned

This is Family Life Week in Toronto, an effort to encourage the improvement of the quality of family living in the community.

As part of this program, a full-day conference on the family will be held in Etobicoke on Saturday called 'Successful Family Living: Strategies for the Seventies.'

The public is invited to attend, especially those interested in improving their own family life or learning to relate better to wives, husbands, parents and children.

The conference will be held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 95 Melbert Ave., Etobicoke, and will continue from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Single persons will be charged \$6 for the sessions, married couples \$9, and students \$3. For information, phone 625-0328.

This conference for the public coincides with the National Council on Family Relations convention being held this week at the Four Seasons-Sheraton Hotel, with experts in family life education attending from all over North America.

Many of the experts attending the convention will be speakers at the one-day conference and topics will include:

Becoming effective parents; marriage, a love-trust relationship; drugs and the family; being a parent and liking it; the exceptional child in the family; the parent-youth conflict; marriage and family counselling.

Liberated women find working isn't such a cinch, doctor says

There might be fewer marital breakdowns if society would regard the sex act as only a small part of a deeper relationship, according to a New York psychotherapist.

Dr. Leah Cahan Schaefer, in Toronto this week for the National Council on Family Relations conference, said in an interview: "If a wife discovers her husband is having a sexual affair with another woman, she is a thousand times more upset than if she finds he is having a deeper, though not sexually intimate, relationship with a female."

She added that people are inclined either to make too much of an issue about physical sex or, conversely, too little of it.

Brief fling

"A man might pick up a girl in a bar, spend an hour with her, or indulge in a brief fling sexually. His wife finds out and immediately she files for divorce."

Yet, it rarely perturbs a wife to find out that, while she has been spending the summer at the cottage with the children, her husband has stayed in the city, and has been filling his empty hours dining or going to the theatre with another woman, she said.

"If the relationship has not included the sex act, it doesn't mean that it hasn't depth. Intimacy is not limited to the physical sex act."



DR. LEAH CAHAN SCHAEFER
New York psychotherapist attended conference

Dr. Schaefer, whose doctoral thesis on female sexuality has been published into a hard-cover book titled *Woman and Sex* (Pantheon Books, \$8.95) is a member of the executive board of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex and a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Counsellors.

Her views on the new morality, or, as she describes

it, casual sex, are as profound.

"Many women who have swung with the so-called modern ideas of sexual freedom because of the Pill and the relaxation of our social mores are discovering loose affairs don't an-

swer their needs for more solid relationships," she said.

Dr. Schaefer added that no matter how liberal society has become in its views on morals, "we are still living in a two-by-two society and it's hard for most people to deal with casual sex."

On women's liberation, Dr. Schaefer said that a lot of women who were complaining of their housebound lives and headed out into the working world are finding it isn't such a cinch.

More assertive

"Along with that independence she has achieved, she finds she is more assertive sexually. This is such an about-turn from what her mother knew as her role. So long as the man was the one who decided about sex, choosing the time and place and making the decisions, things were different.

"Today, if the woman makes the advances, the man can't always decide if he's sufficiently ready. This is terrific in one way—men can react like humans rather than the aggressors. It's the same type of analogy about men being able to cry that is now being accepted by society," she said.

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Parents advised to 'hang loose' when children shock them

So you're a parent and suddenly this kid you've raised with loving care and a high degree of morality comes home and says:

"Mom, Dad, listen, I've got something to tell you. Jean and I have decided to live together. We don't know if we want to get married, but we do know we love each other—now, anyway—so we thought we'd try it out for a while before making a permanent commitment."

What you'd like to say is: "How can you do this to me? What will I tell my friends? To think we've spent all this time, money and sacrifice on you and this is the way you pay us back. . . ."

But wait a minute. You're not a completely hopeless old fogey yet and you're tuned in enough to today's society to know that if you protest too much you'll never see your kid again. . . . or at least not for a darned long time.

So what do you do? If you listen to the advice of a pair of experts in family relations visiting Toronto

this week, you'll "hang loose" as you can even if it's hard for you to do so.

Doesn't sound like a very scientific piece of advice, does it?

And yet it's delivered by a couple who are very much into the scientific aspect of doing research to try to measure accurately what happens inside family groupings and why.

This couple is Dr. Russell Smart and his wife Dr. Mollie Smart, psychologists from the University of Rhode Island, who are in town to deliver a paper at the National Council on Family Relations annual meeting at the Four Seasons-Sheraton Hotel.

Because they are parents of three children themselves and have a strong feeling for family life as participants, not just observers, the Smarts feel inclined to give this kind of an answer rather than a dry academic one:

"Just because we're professionals in the field doesn't mean we haven't had our own traumas to cope with as parents."



Helen Worthington

And it is this kind of understanding that makes the Smarts the kind of academics they are—well-known and highly respected in a field where they've published 10 books reer on a par for 34 years now, together and conducted marriage and ca-

SUBJ, as academics, they're closely attuned to a situation where they see family life struggling through a period of change and where they've seen their own profession changing standards of "what is a family?" To include not just the legal definition but any people who are committed to each other.

Together they say (one starts a sentence or idea, the other finishes it, they're so used to working together in the same field):

"There's more freedom of choice for people now than ever before. Such choices include things like whether to marry legally or whether to have children.

"There are more variables in the way people relate to each other and more alternate family forms being experimented with."

Together they agree that looking at the changing situation optimistically is the only way because many of these new forms are viable and valuable.

"We're in an experimental stage now but something valuable will come of it," says Russell.

His wife adds that she sees "a growing emphasis on honesty of expression among young people. They show more caring and responsibility towards each other and the environment—and living will become simpler because of this environmental thing."

Getting back to their advice to an older generation trying to cope with a situation

like the one mentioned at the beginning of this column, Molly says:

"If each generation listens to the other, there will be no gap. The older generation should take care not to react too quickly, but should try to find out more about the situation.

"If you allow young people to express themselves and their ideas, they want to communicate, if not conform."

She adds that isolation is one of the biggest problems in today's mobile, urban society, and that because of this, people need to learn how to develop close friendships more quickly.

"For example, this sensitivity training type of thing is an effort to try to develop communication skills so people won't feel so lonely and isolated without their extended families."

Mollie Smart is a Canadian who took her BA in psychology at University of Toronto then went to the U.S. to do her

post-graduate studies and met her husband at the Merrill-Palmer Institute.

As an academic couple, they had to face the problem of nepotism at universities (Cornell and Rhode Island) which would not allow the wife of a professor to be on the faculty too.

Now that their three daughters are heading for an academic life as well, Susan, 31, has her PhD in psychology; Ellen, 28, is a PhD candidate in art history at University of London; Laura, 24, has an MA in her parents' field of family life education. They hope the Women's Liberation Movement has changed things to the extent that they won't face the same discrimination.

As a matter of fact, both Laura and her husband are in the same field and out of this will come a real family enterprise. A new book on marriage and the family.

Mollie Smart and her daughter Laura will write it—with assistance from both their husbands.

Groupies marry

By HEATHER SANGUINS

There is a definite trend today for "traditional marriages and families to open their boundaries.", Boston family counsellor and author Joan Constantine said Wednesday night.

She was speaking to a lecture at O'E as a surprise guest instead of the film "Growing Up Female" which was originally scheduled.

Constantine herself has experienced several kinds of marriage, group as well as one that was "very monogamous - to the point of being open." She outlined several other alternatives to two-person marriages then went into detail about one of these group marriages.

Constantine suggested "communalized" marriage where generally several people live together, the terms of which vary greatly. One of these variances in existence to-day are "expanded families" that are commune-like but whose members do not consider themselves to be participants in a commune.

Constantine stressed that in group marriages, although there was "no official ceremony, people considered themselves to be seriously committed".

The speaker indicated the advantages in group marriage for a woman are growth as an individual, more opportunities to do things (through company and a sharing of money and responsibilities) and greater intellectual stimulation.

From her own experience she stated that before her participation in a group marriage she had "no sense of myself" but that she learned through the experience that she was an "unique and different individual".

This set-up also allowed her husband, Larry, to see the "facets of her that people other than him liked."

Constantine and her husband Larry are co-authors of the newly published Group Marriage. Three years of research went into the book and the authors were involved with eleven distinct family groups during this time, involving 104 people.

She said while group marriages were "all over" the country, they were "very hard to find". The reason for this was that they feel threatened by the interference of the mass media. Constantine pointed out that "if you're different people do attack you, because they are afraid of something that is different, or strange" to them.

Statistically speaking, the speaker pointed out, in the US the average length of a two-person marriage is 7.1 years. For two people who are "living together" the duration is about eighteen months.

Similarly, Group Marriages, whose form has been around since 1960 generally last about the same amount of time. Constantine cited the reasons for the break-up of a group marriage to be the same as those for a two-person marriage; quite often this is conflict in "childrearing styles."

Three common reasons to form group marriages are for "personal growth", intellectual stimulation for oneself and one's children and "sexual variety." While the organization of a group marriage took place she said that "men tended to be the talkers" but "when women decide on it they are the force behind it."

She concluded by saying that "in general, the most difficult bond to express positive feelings is between the men in a group marriage."

For the future Constantine projects "plurality of lifestyles" open to the individual. She is pleased at the present "spirit of experimentation" as the "people who live together to-day are going to be able to tell us how to live together in the world tomorrow."

'Our way of life is off the rails' director of family institute says

William A. Dyson, executive director of the Vanier Institute of the Family, warned last night "our general way of life has gone off the rails."

He told a meeting of the National Council of Family Relations at the Four Seasons-Sheraton hotel that "the many social, economic and political problems, as

they are called, are but symptoms of the dissolution of this culture.

"They are signals that something very deep is happening," he continued. "Perhaps the easiest way to begin to talk about the madness that besets us as a people is to say that we do not really know any longer what is real."

He said part of the problem is that our culture does not look at the world as inter-related.

"The search along the beaches of Texas this past summer for the bodies of the young boys and men (mass-murder victims), the recent burning and stoning deaths in Boston . . . the

pollution of the North Sea shoreline . . . the TV world of sex and violence are all related," Dyson said.

He said he was on a Caribbean island last year which does not have a money economy.

"As I discussed with them, I found their unemployed did not go hungry.

they had no orphanages, as such children lived with their larger families. They had no homes for the aged as these people were integrated in their villages.

"In my view, the people on this island have a social security pattern which is far beyond ours in its humaneness."

Sexuality the theme of forum

The role of sex in human relations will be the theme of an open discussion program at the St. Lawrence Centre at 8 p.m. Monday.

The Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) in conjunction with the Toronto Arts Foundation is presenting the forum.

The discussion examines whether some of the present concepts of right and wrong are outdated. A film titled *The Quickie* will be shown.

Taking part on the panel will be guest speaker, Dr. Lester Kirkendall, author, lecturer and authority on human sexuality; Sandra Pyke, associate professor at York University; John Dunbar, PhD candidate in psychology; Patrice Merrin, administrator, Planned Parenthood of Toronto and moderator Barbara Frum, writer and broadcaster.



BARBARA FRUM
Panel moderator