

Homestead Notes

**What lies ahead
for the family
in America
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By SALLY BAIR
Feature Writer

Dr. Stella Goldberg is optimistic about the future of the American family and said she rejects the notion that the family is disappearing.

Speaking in a workshop during the homemakers seminar in Hershey recently Goldberg, associate professor in the College of Human Development at Penn State University, said, "The family is changing, but it always has been changing. The family may have greater significance than ever before."

Despite her optimism, she termed the present high divorce rate "really scary," and predicted that the trend toward divorce will continue until we see the highest divorce rate in history. Responding to questions from the audience, Dr. Goldberg said one main reason for the high divorce rate is that the "more you expect, the more you are likely to be disappointed. If you expect little, you settle for less."

Furthermore, she said, "Women now have more options than ever before. Most women can support themselves, so they don't need to stay married for room and board." Also, the stigma which was previously attached to the divorced person no longer exists, and divorce is no longer taboo even in professions where it was once highly criticized, like the ministry and teaching professions.

Dr. Goldberg also asserted, "Many people marry for the wrong reasons. Many people don't have their own heads together. For the two most important steps in life - marriage and parenting, we receive absolutely no training."

When this comment drew applause and loud murmurs of support from the all-women audience, Dr. Goldberg added, "I believe we really ought to implement good family life programs in public schools with good teachers. Children must learn this - good marriages won't happen by instincts."

Ideally, Dr. Goldberg said, "A good basic family life education program should be a joint effort of the family and the schools. A parent education program should be included."

She discussed the implications of the high rate of unwanted pregnancies among high school girls and the venereal disease epidemic and concluded, "Everyone ought to be involved - it's that important." She stressed that the community must have input into any family life program in the schools so that parents can be involved in what types of things are taught. She said, "It's not a matter of sex education; it's a matter of character education."

"We can't have effective programs without community involvement. We must ask for feedback." She said the emphasis must be on "wholesome interpersonal relationships."

Making other predications about the family in the "not too distant future," Dr. Goldberg maintained that families will become increasingly more affluent and will be able to do more than just buy necessities. Education, travel, recreation, eating out and other leisure time activities will take up increasing amounts of money.

She said, "Increased affluence will bring about some positive benefits, one of which will be that women will go to work out of desire and not out of necessity." She predicted that there will be increasing numbers of women working outside the home, who also have young children which will trigger an increase in the amount of nursery services provided."

Another side benefit of the changing family may be an increased number of people choosing brand new occupations in their mid-forties. "The career you start with may not necessarily be the one you wind up with," she said.

She said family lifestyles will alter in the future with a closer standardization of ideals and a convergence of ideas. She said people from all classes will eat out, buy the same types of wearing apparel and purchase similar kinds of outdoor play equipment.

She suggested that although some people will experiment with different lifestyles entirely, the percentage will not be great. She also noted that experimentation with different styles of living is not new, but dates from Biblical times.

She predicted that a larger number of people may choose not to marry at all, but said that despite the high divorce rate, "We are the most marrying people in the world." This results in what Dr. Goldberg terms "serial or sequential monogamy," because people marry over and over and over.

Dr. Goldberg told the women, "The more democratic a marriage, the more flexible it becomes and the more need there is for communication." She said effective communications must be learned, adding, "We talk at someone, not with someone." She said further that problems should be discussed at the time they occur, not at some pre-appointed time for a "discussion."

In the future, the family will become even more future-oriented, and members of a family will do tasks they feel most comfortable doing instead of having male-female types of jobs, Dr. Goldberg predicted.

Dr. Goldberg cited studies which show that many functions which historically have been performed by the family have been usurped by social institutions. For example, the family once afforded protection to its members, but now an outside agency takes care of that function. Leisure time was once the domain of the family but again outside agencies fulfill much leisure time. Religious functions of the family are now mostly provided by churches.

However, Dr. Goldberg noted that there are two major functions which are becoming increasingly more important. The family provides the primary socialization of its members and it provides the affectional function; that is, it provides love for all of its members. Dr. Goldberg emphasized, "Love is learned, starting from birth."

She discussed other factors influencing the family today, with a major one being the demographic revolution. She emphasized that the world population is multiplying at an unprecedented rate, and that by the year 2000 there will be between six and seven billion people living here.

She talked about the "cybernetic revolution," calling cybernation the science of relationships, including such things as the scientific revolution. She raised the question, "As more and more machinery performs the work of man, what will happen to the human potential for creativity?"

She said we may need to institute programs in the school systems to teach people how to use leisure time in more effective ways, but added, "To date, automation has not increased leisure time. It has only given more goods and services."

Dr. Goldberg asserted that the "human rights revolution" is gaining increasing freedom for women and for marriages. She said, "The emphasis on the individual which is inherent in democratic ideals shows itself."

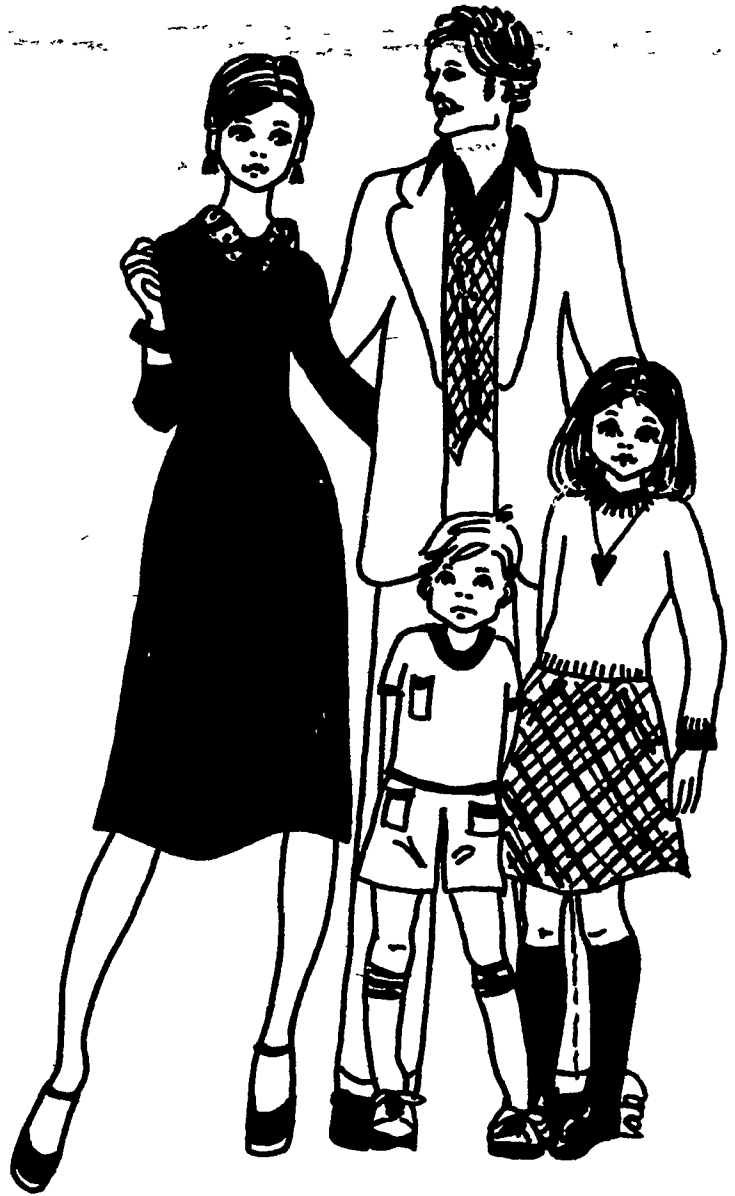
Dr. Goldberg told the women, "We must transmit respect for life to our children. Men and women must work together and males and females must both be involved."

She suggested that the current marriage and birth rate is a reflection of the higher birthrate following World War II. She predicted that families will continue to follow the trend to smallness, with one or two children being the norm.

"Young couples," she commented, "will be nearer in age at the time of marriage, therefore ensuring a greater

probability of mutual survival to old age."

In relating research on the family which takes into consideration trends having an effect on family life as we know it, Dr. Goldberg said, "The family is still needed for contentment and for stability."



My Thoughts

And welcome to them

By JOANNE SPAHR
Associate Editor

Mom. Well, Mom's the lady who always "did without" so my brother and I could have more, and she's the person who never took a second helping of her favorite pie if we were still hungry.

She also taught us compassion, and that it was okay to cry. And, when we did, only her loving arms were good enough to hold us and make it all better.

Then, as we grew older, only Mom listened to our school stories and laughed out loud when the jokes weren't even funny, and read our school compositions at night when she thought we didn't know. She thought they were masterpieces.

Then, college came. And, Mom's the lady who had to struggle within herself to accept us growing away from her and becoming "college kids" with strange ideas and funny way of dress and thought. But, she never gave up on us, and she was still proud of us because she loved us.

And, now, she's the grandmother who shares a humorous joke with her grandson which only they can know, and only they can share—for hours on end.

And, she's still the mother that laughs out loud at the bad jokes, loves the crummy stories, and cries when we hurt, and when she doesn't understand us.

I guess she's gotten older, and I guess she's changed, but you know, I never noticed. To me she's the timeless, beautiful lady I call Mom, and that will always be the same.

Happy Mothers Day.