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## Conjugal Roles and Social Networks\*

This paper will give an account of the sociological results of an intensive interdisciplinary study of 20 London families. It will be confined to one problem: how to interpret the variations occurring in the way husbands and wives performed their conjugal roles.

A joint conjugal role-relationship is one in which husband and wife carry out many activities together, with a minimum of task differentiation and separation of interests. Husband and wife not only plan the affairs of the family together, but also exchange many household tasks and spend much of their leisure time together. A segregated conjugal role-relationship is one in which husband and wife have a clear differentiation of tasks and a considerable number of separate interests and activities; they have a division of labor into male tasks and female tasks; they expect to have different leisure pursuits; both have their own friends outside the home. Yet, these are only differences of degree. All families must have some division of labor between husband and wife; all families must have some joint activities.

Early in the research, it seemed likely that these differences of segregation roles were related to forces in the social environment and an effort was made to explain them in terms of social class. This attempt was not very successful. Most husbands in joint conjugal role-relationships were professionals, but there were several working-class families that had relatively little segregation and several professional families in which segregation was considerable. An attempt was also made to relate degree of segregation to the type of local area in which the family lived, since the families with most segregation lived in homogeneous areas of low population turnover, whereas those with predominantly joint role-relationships lived in heterogeneous areas of high population turnover. Once again, there were several exceptions. But there was a more important difficulty in these attempts to correlate segregation of conjugal roles with class position and type of local area. The research was not designed to produce valid statistical correlations. Our aim was to study the interrelation of various social and psychological factors within each family considered as a social system. Attempts at rudimentary statistical correlation did not make

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clear how one factor affected another. Attempts to correlate segregation of conjugal roles with factors selected from the generalized social environment of the family did not yield a meaningful interpretation. I turned to look more closely at the immediate environment of the families, that is, at their external relationships with friends, neighbors, relatives, clubs, shops, places of work, etc. This approach proved to be more fruitful.

The external social relationships of all families appeared to assume the form of a network rather than of an organized group. In an organized group, the component individuals make up a larger social whole with common aims, interdependent roles, and a distinctive sub-culture. In network formation some but not all of the component individuals have social relationships with one another. They do not form an organized group and the component external units do not make up a larger social whole; they are not surrounded by a common boundary.

Although all the research families belonged to networks rather than to groups, there was considerable variation in the connectedness of these networks. By connectedness I mean the extent to which the people known by a family know one another independently of the family. I use the term dispersed network to describe a network in which there are few relationships amongst the component units, and the term highly connected network to describe a network in which there are many such relationships.

A detailed examination of the research data reveals that the degree of segregation of conjugal roles is related to the degree of network connectedness. Those families with a high degree of segregation in role-relationships had a highly connected network; many of their friends, neighbors, and relatives knew one another. Families with a relatively joint role-relationship between husband and wife had a dispersed network; few of their relatives, neighbors, and friends knew one another. There were many degrees of variation between these two extremes. On the basis of our data, I should therefore like to put forward the following hypothesis: The degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's social network. The more connected the network, the more segregation between the roles of husband and wife. The more dispersed the network, the less segregation between the roles of husband and wife.

If one is to understand segregation of conjugal roles, one should examine the effect of the family's immediate social environment of friends, neighbors, relatives, and institutions. The question remains, however, as to why some families should have highly connected networks whereas others have dispersed networks. In part, network connectedness depends on the family themselves. One family may choose to introduce their friends, neighbors, and relatives to one another, whereas another may not. One family may move around a great deal so that its network becomes dispersed, whereas another family may stay

put. But these choices are limited and shaped by a number of forces over which the family does not have direct control. At this point the total social environment becomes relevant. The economic and occupational system, the structure of formal institutions, the ecology of cities and many other factors affect the connectedness of networks, and limit and shape the decisions that families make. Factors associated with social class and neighborhood composition affect segregation of conjugal roles through direct action on the internal structure of the family, but indirectly through their effects on its network. Conceptually, the network stands between the family and the total social environment. The connectedness of a family's network depends, on the one hand, on certain forces in the total environment and, on the other, on the personalities of the members of the family and on the way they react to these forces.

### *Methods of Collecting Data\**

Although this paper will be devoted primarily to discussion of the effect of external social relationship on the role-relationship of husband and wife, the research as a whole was designed to investigate families not only sociologically but also psychologically. The research techniques accordingly consisted of a combination of the field-work method of the social anthropologist, in which the group under investigation is studied as a working whole in its natural habitat in so far as this is possible, and the case-study method in which individuals are studied by clinical interviews. No attempt was made to use statistical procedures.

The families studied were "ordinary," in the sense that they did not come to us for help with personal or familial problems, and they were usually able to cope themselves with such difficulties as they had. We sought them out, they did not come to us. In order to simplify the task for comparison, only families with young children were selected. In order further to restrict the number of variables, only English families of Protestant background were selected. All 20 families lived in London or Greater London, but they were scattered all over the area and did not form an organized group. Although the families resembled one another in phase of marriage and in national and religious background, they varied considerably in occupation and in socio-economic status; the net incomes of the husbands after tax ranged from £325 to £1,500 (at 1953 values).

Much difficulty was encountered in contacting suitable families, and the effort to find them taught us a good deal about the way families are related to other social groups. The 20 families were eventually contacted through the officials of various service institutions, such as doctors, hospitals, schools,

\*For an account of field techniques see Robb (1953) and Bott (1957, Chapter 2).

local political parties and through friends of the family. Introductions were most successful when the contact person was well known and trusted by both husband and wife, and the most satisfactory channel of contact was through friends of the family.

After the contact person had told a prospective family about the research and had got their agreement to an explanatory interview by one of the research staff, one of the field workers visited the family at their home to describe what the research was about and what it would involve for the family. The field worker explained the background of the research, the content of the interviews, and the time they would take, and made it clear that the family could withdraw at any time, that the material would be treated with professional discretion and that if we wished to publish any confidential material that might reveal the couple's identity, we should consult them beforehand. The research staff also undertook to pay any expenses that the couple might incur as a result of the investigation. Although the provisional and explanatory nature of the first interview was always emphasized, we found that most of the couples who got that far had usually decided to take part in the research before they met the field worker, chiefly on the basis of what the contact person had told them. We have no systematic information about couples who were consulted but decided not to participate.

After a family had agreed to take part, the field worker paid several visits to them at home in the evening for joint interviews with the husband and wife. He or she also went at least once on the week-end to meet the children and observe the whole family together. There were thirteen home interviews on the average, the range being from eight to nineteen. Each home interview began with half an hour of casual chatting followed by more focussed discussions on particular topics during which notes were taken. The topics discussed were kinship, family background and personal history until marriage; the first phase of the family from marriage until the birth of the first child; an account of family life at the time of interviewing, including a daily, weekly and yearly diary; a description of external social relationships with service institutions such as schools, church, clinic, doctor, with voluntary associations and recreational institutions, and more informal relationships with friends, neighbors and relatives; an account of the division of labor between husband and wife in overall planning, in the economic support of the family, in domestic tasks and in child care; and finally, questions about values and ideology concerning family life, social class, money and financial management, and general political, social and religious matters. These topics were used as a general guide by the field worker; their order and the form of questioning were left to discretion. Usually he or she raised a topic, and the couple carried on the discussion themselves with occasional additional questions. The discussion frequently wandered away from the assigned topic, but little attempt was made to restrict

such digressions, since all the behavior of husband and wife towards one another and towards the field worker was held to be significant data.

In addition to the interviews with the 20 families, discussions about families in general were held with various persons, particularly doctors, who had considerable knowledge of family life. Discussions were also held with various organized groups such as Community Centres and Townswomen's Guilds. These groups had no direct connection with the families we interviewed, and in most cases they were composed of considerably older people, usually women. These discussions were therefore not directly relevant to the analysis of the research families, but they provided useful information on the norms of family life. In a public, group situation, especially one which lasts for only one session, people seem much more willing to talk about norms than to discuss their actual behavior.

### *Classification of Families*

If families are classified according to the extremes of the two dimensions of conjugal role-segregation and network connectedness, four patterns are logically possible: segregated conjugal role-relationship associated with a highly connected network; segregated conjugal role-relationship associated with a dispersed network; joint conjugal role-relationship associated with a highly connected network; and joint conjugal role-relationship associated with a dispersed network. Empirically, two of these patterns, the second and third, did not occur. There were no families in which a highly segregated conjugal role-relationship was associated with a dispersed network; there were no families in which a joint conjugal role-relationship was associated with a highly connected network.

Six of the research families were clustered in the first and fourth patterns. There was one family that conformed to the first pattern, a high degree of conjugal role-segregation combined with a highly connected network. There were five families that conformed to the fourth pattern, a joint conjugal role-relationship associated with a dispersed network. These six families represent the extremes of the research set. There were nine families that were intermediate in degree of conjugal role-segregation and similarly intermediate in degree of network connectedness. Finally there were five families that appeared to be in a state of transition both with respect to their network formation and with respect to their conjugal role-relationship.

Among the twenty families, there was thus some clustering at certain points along a possible continuum from a highly segregated to a very joint conjugal role-relationship, and along a second continuum from a highly connected to a dispersed network. The families did not fall into sharply separated types so that

TABLE I Relationship Among Conjugal Segregation, Type of Network and Type of Occupation\*

<i>Families in descending order of conjugal segregation</i>	<i>Type of network</i>	<i>Type of occupation</i>
Newbolt	close-knit	semi-skilled manual
Mudge	medium-knit	semi-skilled manual
Dodgson (changing reluctantly from highly segregated to more joint)	transitional (move already made)	semi-skilled manual
Barkway	transitional (contemplating move)	clerical
Redfern	transitional (about to move)	semi-professional
Baldock	medium-knit	skilled manual
Apsley	medium-knit	professional
Wraith (becoming more joint)	transitional (several moves already made)	professional
Appleby	medium-knit	skilled manual clerical
Fawcett	medium-knit	clerical
Butler (changing eagerly from highly segregated to more joint)	transitional (move already made)	skilled manual
Thornton	medium-knit	semi-professional
Hartley	medium-knit	semi-professional
Salmon	medium-knit	semi-professional
Jarrold	medium-knit	skilled manual
Bruce	loose-knit	clerical
Denton	loose-knit	professional
Bullock	loose-knit	professional
Woodman	loose-knit	semi-professional
Daniels	loose-knit	semi-professional

\*All names are fictitious

divisions are somewhat arbitrary, but for convenience of description, I shall divide the families into four groups (shown in Table I): 1. highly segregated conjugal role-relationship associated with highly connected network; 2. joint conjugal role-relationship associated with dispersed network; 3. intermediate degrees of conjugal role-segregation and network connectedness, and 4. transitional families. No claim is made here that these are the only patterns that can occur; further research would probably reveal others. In the following discussion I shall be chiefly concerned not with these divisions, but rather with the fact that the order according to degree of conjugal role-segregation follows the order according to degree of network connectedness, and I shall attempt to show the mechanisms by which this relationship operates.

*Highly Segregated Conjugal Role-Relationship  
Associated with Highly Connected Network*

The research set contained only one family of this type—the Newbolts (Ns). They had been married four years when the interviewing began and had two small children. In the following discussion, I shall describe their actual behavior, indicating the points at which they depart from their norms.

EXTERNAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. N had a semi-skilled manual job at a factory in an East End area adjacent to the one in which they lived. He said that many other men in the local area had jobs at the same place, or were doing the same sort of work at similar factories and workshops nearby. Mrs. N did not work, but she felt that she was unusual in this respect. Most of the neighboring women and many of her female relatives had jobs; she did not think there was anything morally wrong with such work, but she said that she had never liked working and preferred to stay at home with the children. Mr. N said that he thought it was best for her and the children if she stayed at home, and added that he felt it was a bit of a reflection on a man if his wife had to go out to work.

The Ns used the services of a local hospital and a maternity and child welfare clinic. They expected to send their children to the local elementary school. They were also in touch with the local housing authority because they were trying to find a new flat. These various service institutions were not felt to have any particular relationship to one another, except in the sense that they were all felt to be foreign bodies, not really part of the local life. Mrs. N was a little bit afraid of them, particularly of the hospital and of doctors. On one occasion, while waiting with her baby and the field worker in an otherwise empty hospital room for a doctor to attend to the baby, she said in a whisper, "My husband says that we pay for it [the hospital services, through National Health subscriptions] and we should use it, but I don't like coming here. I don't like hospitals and doctors, do you?"

To the Ns, the local area was definitely a community in the social sense, a place with an identity of its own and a distinctive way of life. They spoke of it with great pride and contrasted it favorably with other areas. "It has a bad name, they say we are rough, but I think it's the best place there is. Everyone is friendly . . . there is no life in the West End compared with the East End. They drink champagne and we drink beer. When things are la-di-da you feel out of place." They took it for granted that the other inhabitants had similar feelings of local pride and loyalty. Both the Ns had grown up in the same area, as had most of their relatives and friends. Trips outside the area were like adventures

into a foreign land, especially for Mrs. N, and very few informal social relationships were kept up with people outside the area. Physical distance was felt to be an almost insuperable barrier to social contact.

Physically, the area was far from ideal as a place to live. The houses were old-fashioned, inconvenient and crowded. The Ns were faced with a difficult choice of whether to move out of London to a modern flat on a new housing estate, or to stay put in cramped quarters, in the old familiar local area with their friends and relatives. They knew of several other young couples who were faced with a similar dilemma. Group discussions at a local community center and the research of the Institute of Community Studies indicated that many local residents feel this to be an important social and personal problem (Young, 1954).

The Ns felt that their neighbors were socially similar to themselves, meaning that they had the same sort of jobs, the same sort of background, the same sort of outlook on life. Because the Ns had grown up in the area, as had many of their relatives and neighbors, they knew a very considerable number of local people, and many of the people they knew were acquainted with one another. Their social network was highly connected. In fact there was considerable overlap of social roles; instead of there being people in three or four separate categories—friend, neighbor, relative and colleague—the same person frequently filled two, three or even four of these roles simultaneously.

The Ns took it for granted that Mr. N, like other husbands in their social circle, would have some form of recreation with men away from home. In his case it was football, although the most common form of recreation was felt to be drinking and visiting in the local pub, where many husbands spent an evening or two a week with their friends; quite frequently some of these men were friends of old standing, men who had belonged to the same childhood gang and others were work colleagues. Mr. N had kept in touch with one or two friends of his childhood; he also played football and went to matches with some of his colleagues; he mentioned that several of his friends knew one another. Mrs. N knew a bit about these men, but she did not expect to join in their activities with her husband. She had a nodding acquaintance with the wives of two or three of these men, and occasionally talked to them when she was out shopping.

Mrs. N also had her own separate relationships in which her husband did not expect to join. She knew many of her female neighbors, just as they knew one another; she took it for granted that a friendly relationship with a neighbor would be dropped if the woman moved away. Neighbors saw one another on the landings, in the street, in shops, occasionally over a cup of tea inside the flat or house. They talked over their own affairs and those of other neighbors. Neighbors frequently accused one another of something—of betraying a confidence, of taking the wrong side in a children's quarrel, of failing to return



borrowed articles, of gossip. One has little privacy in such a situation. But if one wants to reap the rewards of companionship and receive small acts of mutual aid, one has to conform to local standards and one has to put up with being included in the gossip. Indeed, being gossiped about is as much a sign that one belongs to the neighborly network as being gossiped with. If one refuses to have anything to do with one's neighbors one is thought odd, but eventually one will be left alone; no gossip, no companionship.

With the exception of visiting relatives and an occasional Sunday outing with the children, the Ns spent very little of their leisure time in joint recreation; even though they could have got their relatives to mind the children for them, they rarely went out together. There was no joint entertaining of friends at home. From time to time Mr. N brought a friend home and Mrs. N made tea and talked a bit to the friend; female neighbors often dropped in during the evening to borrow something, but they did not stay long if Mr. N was there. There was no planned joint entertaining in which Mr. and Mrs. N asked another husband and wife to spend an evening with them. Such joint entertaining as existed was carried on with relatives, not with friends. Poverty does not explain the absence of joint entertaining, for the Ns considered themselves to be relatively well off. It did not seem to occur to them that they might spend their surplus money on entertainment of friends; they felt that such money should be spent on furniture, new things for the children or large gatherings of relatives at weddings, funerals and christenings.

There was much visiting and mutual aid between relatives, particularly by the women. The Ns had far more active social relationships with relatives than any other research family, and there was also a great deal of independent contact by their relatives with one another in addition to their contacts with the Ns themselves. The network of kin was highly connected, more so than those of neighbors or friends. The women were more active than the men in keeping up contacts with relatives, with the result that the networks of wives were more highly connected than the networks of their husbands. Although husbands were recognized to be less active in kinship affairs, Mr. N paid occasional visits to his mother, both by himself and with Mrs. N. There were some activities for which joint participation by husband and wife was felt to be desirable. At weddings, funerals and christenings, there were large assemblages of relatives, and it was felt to be important that both husband and wife should attend. Recent and prospective weddings, twenty-first birthday parties and christenings formed an important topic of discussion throughout the interviews with the Ns.

In a group discussion, a man living in the same local area as the Ns and having a similar sort of family life and kinship network summed up the situation by saying, "Men have friends. Women have relatives." For Mrs. N, there was no independent category of friend; friends were either neighbors or

relatives. She had had a succession of girl friends in her adolescence, but she said that she did not see so much of them since they had all got married and had had children. She always described them as girl friends, not as friends. Both Mr. and Mrs. N used the term friend as if it applied only to men; the term neighbor, on the other hand, seemed to refer only to women. Mr. N looked rather shocked when I asked him if he saw much of the neighbors.

Later on in the group discussion, the same man observed, "Women don't have friends. They have Mum." In Mrs. N's case the relationship between herself and her mother was indeed very close. Her mother lived nearby and Mrs. N went to visit her nearly every day, taking her children along with her. She and her mother and her mother's sisters also went to visit Mrs. N's maternal grandmother. Together these women and their children formed an important group, helping one another in household tasks and child care, and providing aid for one another in crises. Within the network of relatives there was a nucleus composed of the grandmother, her daughters, and her daughters' daughters; the relationships of these women with one another were sufficiently intense and distinctive to warrant the term organized group in the sense defined above. Mrs. N's female relatives provided some of the domestic help and emotional support that, in other research families, a wife expected to get from her husband. Mrs. N felt tremendously attached to her mother emotionally. She felt that a bad relationship between mother and daughter was unnatural, a complete catastrophe. She would, I feel sure, have been deeply shocked by the seemingly cold and objective terms in which many of the women in the other research families analyzed their mothers' characters. The close tie with the mother is not only a source of help, however; it may also be a potential source of friction, for if her husband and her mother do not get along well together a young wife is likely to feel torn by conflicting loyalties. Mrs. N felt that she was particularly fortunate in that her husband and her mother liked each other.

There was considerable segregation between Mr. and Mrs. N in their external relationships. Mrs. N had her network and Mr. N had his. The number of joint external relationships was comparatively small. At the same time, there were many links between their networks: the husbands of some of Mrs. N's neighbors were men who were colleagues of Mr. N, some of Mrs. N's relatives also worked at the same place as Mr. N, and in a general way, his family was known to hers even before Mr. and Mrs. N got married. The connectedness of the combined networks of Mr. and Mrs. N was high compared to that of the families to be discussed below. But the Ns' total network was sharply divided into the husband's network and the wife's network. Furthermore, her network was more highly connected than his: many of the relatives and neighbors with whom she was in contact saw one another independently of her, whereas there were fewer independent links between Mr. N's colleagues, his football associates, and his friends from childhood.

## CONJUGAL ROLE-SEGREGATION

The previous description reveals considerable segregation between Mr. and Mrs. N in their external relationships. There was a similar segregation in the way they carried out their internal domestic tasks. They took it for granted that there should be a clear-cut division of labor between them, and that all husbands and wives in their social circle would organize their households in a similar way. One man said in a group discussion: "A lot of men wouldn't mind helping their wives if the curtains were drawn so people couldn't see." Although the Ns felt that major decisions should be made jointly, in the day-to-day running of the household he had his jobs and she had hers. He had control of the money and gave her a housekeeping allowance of £5 a week. Mrs. N did not know how much money he earned, and it did not seem to her that a wife would want or need to know this. Although the Ns said that £5 was the amount most wives were given for housekeeping, Mrs. N had great difficulty in making it cover all the expenses of food, rent, utilities and five shillings' saving for Christmas. She told Mr. N whenever she ran short, and he left a pound or two under the clock when he went out the next morning. She said that he was very generous with his money and she felt that she was unusually fortunate in being spared financial quarrels.

Mrs. N was responsible for most of the housework and child care, although Mr. N did household repairs and helped to entertain the children on week-ends. Mrs. N expected that he would do some of the housework if she became ill, but this was usually unnecessary because her mother or her sister or one of her cousins would come to her aid. Indeed, these female relatives helped her a great deal even with the everyday tasks of housework and child care.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE-RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

Mr. and Mrs. N took it for granted that men had male interests and women had female interests and that there were few leisure activities that they would naturally share. In their view, a good husband was one who was generous with the housekeeping allowance, did not waste money on extravagant personal recreation, helped his wife with the housework if she got ill, and took an interest in the children. A good wife was a good manager and an affectionate mother, a woman who kept out of serious rows with neighbors and got along well with her own and her husband's relatives. A good marital relationship was one with a harmonious division of labor, but the Ns placed little stress on the importance of joint activities and shared interests. It is difficult to make any definite statement on the Ns' attitudes towards sexual relations, for they did not come to the Institute for clinical interviews. Judging from Mrs. N's references

to such matters when Mr. N was absent, it seems likely that she felt that physical sexuality was an intrusion on a peaceful domestic relationship rather than an expression of such a relationship; it was as if sexuality were felt to be basically violent and disruptive. The findings of clinical workers and of other research workers suggest that among families like the Ns, there is little stress on the importance of physical sexuality for a happy marriage (Slater and Woodside, 1951).

*Joint Conjugal Role-Relationships  
Associated with Dispersed Networks*

There were five families of this type. All the husbands had professional or semi-professional occupations. Two of the husbands had been upwardly mobile in occupation relative to their fathers. All five families, however, had a well-established pattern of external relationships; they might make new relationships, but the basic pattern was likely to remain the same. Similarly, all had worked out a fairly stable division of labor in domestic tasks.

EXTERNAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The husbands' occupations had little intrinsic connection with the local areas in which they lived. All five carried on their work at some distance from the area in which their homes were located, although two did some additional work at home. But in no case was there any feeling that the occupation was locally rooted.

Whether or not wives should work was considered to be a very controversial question by these families. Unless they were very well off financially—and none of these five families considered themselves to be so—both husband and wife welcomed the idea of a double income, even though much of the additional money had to be spent on caring for the children. But money was not the only consideration; women also wanted to work for the sake of the work itself. It was felt that if she desired it, a woman should have a career or some sort of special interest and skill comparable in seriousness to her husband's occupation; on the other hand, it was felt that young children needed their mother's care and that ideally she should drop her career at least until the youngest child was old enough to go to school. But most careers cannot easily be dropped and picked up again several years later. Two of the wives had solved the problem by continuing to work; they had made careful (and expensive) provision for the care of their children. One wife worked at home. One planned to take up her

special interest again as soon as her youngest child went to nursery school, and the fifth wife was already doing so.

These husbands and wives maintained contact with schools, general practitioners, hospitals and in some cases local maternity and child welfare clinics. Most of them also used the services of a solicitor, an insurance agent and other similar professional people. Unlike the first type of family, they did not feel that service institutions were strange and alien; it did not bother them when they had to go out of their local area to find such services, and they were usually well informed about service institutions and could exploit them efficiently. They were not afraid of doctors. There was no strict division of labor between husband and wife in dealing with service institutions. The wife usually dealt with those institutions that catered for children, and the husband dealt with the legal and financial ones, but either could take over the other's duties if necessary.

These husbands and wives did not regard the neighborhood as a source of friends. In most cases husbands and wives had moved around a good deal both before and after marriage, and in no case were they living in the neighborhood in which they grew up. Four were living in areas of such a kind that only a few of the neighbors were felt to be socially similar to the family themselves. The fifth family was living in a suburb that the husband and wife felt to be composed of people socially similar to one another, but quite different from themselves. In all cases these husbands and wives were polite but somewhat distant to neighbors. In order to have become proper friends, the neighbors would have had not only to be socially similar to the family themselves, but also to share a large number of tastes and interests. Establishing such a relationship takes a long exploratory testing, and the feeling seems to have been that it was dangerous to make the test with neighbors since one ran the risk of being pestered by friendly attentions that one might not want to return. Since many of the neighbors probably had similar feelings, particularly when the neighborhood was socially heterogeneous, it is not surprising that intimate social relationships were not rapidly established. Since these families had so little social intercourse with their neighbors, they were very much less worried than the first type of family about gossip and conformity to local norms. Indeed, in the circumstances one can hardly say that there were any specifically local norms; certainly there was not the body of shared attitudes and values built up through personal interaction since childhood that was characteristic of the local area inhabited by the Ns.

The children were less discriminating than their parents. Unless restricted by their parents, they played with anyone in the street. This caused some of the parents a certain amount of anxiety, particularly when they felt that the area was very heterogeneous. Other parents adopted the view that mixing with

children of other social classes was a good thing. In any case, all parents relied on their own influence and on the education of the children to erase any possibly bad effects of such contact.

It seemed very difficult for these families to find the sort of house and local area in which they wanted to live. They wanted to own a reasonably cheap house with a garden in central London, a house within easy reach of their friends, of plays, concerts, galleries and so forth. Ideally they wanted a cheap, reliable cleaning-woman-cum-baby-sitter to live nearby, possibly even with the family if they could afford it. Only one family had achieved something approaching this aim. The others were making do with various compromises, impeded by lack of money as well as by the scarcity of suitable houses.

For these families, friends were felt to provide the most important type of external relationship. Not all of each family's friends knew one another; it was not usual for a large number of a family's friends to be in intimate contact with one another independently of their contact with the family. The network of friends was typically dispersed (unconnected). Husband and wife had usually established friendships over a period of years in many different social contexts—at school, during the course of their professional training, in the Services, at various jobs and very occasionally even because of living in the same neighborhood. Their friends were scattered all over London, sometimes all over Britain. Because the network of friends was so dispersed, their social control over the family was dispersed and fragmented. The husband and wife were very sensitive to what their friends thought of them, but since the friends had so little contact with one another, they were not likely to present a unified body of public opinion. Amongst all the different bits of advice they might receive, husband and wife had to make up their own minds about what they should do. They were less persecuted by gossip than the first type of family, but they were also less sustained by it. Their friends did not form a solid body of helpers.

In marked contrast to the Ns, nearly all of the husband's and wife's friends were joint friends; it was felt to be important that both husband and wife should like a family friend, and if a friend was married, then it was hoped that all four partners to the relationship would like one another. Exceptions were tolerated, especially in the case of very old friends, but both husband and wife were uncomfortable if there was real disagreement between them over a friend. Friendship, like marriage, required shared interests and similar tastes, although there was some specialization of interests among different friends. For example, one couple might be golfing friends whereas others might be pub and drinking friends; still others were all-round friends, and it was these who were felt to be the most intimate.

Joint entertainment of friends was a major form of recreation. Even when poverty made invitations to dinner or parties impracticable, friends were still

asked over jointly even if only for coffee or tea in the evening. It was considered provincial for husbands to cluster at one end of the room and wives at the other; everyone should be able to talk to everyone else. These husbands and wives usually had enough shared interests to make this possible. Many of them were highly educated, so that they had a common background of general topics, but even those who lacked such education usually make an attempt to talk about matters of general interest.

After these couples had had children, it had become increasingly difficult for them to visit their friends since they often lived at a considerable distance and most of them were also tied down by young children. Considerable expense and trouble were taken to make such visiting possible. It was obvious that friends were of primary importance to these families.

There were usually other forms of joint recreation besides visiting friends, such as eating in foreign restaurants, going to plays, the cinema and concerts. After children were born, there had been a marked drop in external joint recreation in preference for things that could be done at home. Going out had become a special occasion with all the paraphernalia of a baby-sitter and arrangements made in advance.

These five families had far less contact with their relatives than the Ns. Their relatives were not concentrated in the same local area as themselves, and in most cases were scattered all over the country and did not keep in close touch with one another. They formed a dispersed network. It was felt that friendly relations should be kept up with parents, and in several cases the birth of the children had led to a sort of reunion with parents. It seems likely that becoming a parent facilitates a resolution of some of the emotional tensions between adult children and their own parents, particularly between women and their mothers. It is possible that in some cases the arrival of children may exacerbate such tensions, but none of these five families had had such an experience. There are of course some obvious practical advantages in increased contact with parents; they are usually very fond of their grandchildren, so that they make affectionate and reliable baby-sitters. If they live close enough to take on this task their services are greatly appreciated.

Among the families with dispersed networks, there was not the tremendous stress on the mother-daughter relationship that was described for Mrs. N, although women were usually rather more active than men in keeping up kinship ties. There were also fewer conflicts of loyalty; it was felt that if conflicts arose between one's parents and one's spouse, one owed one's first loyalty to one's spouse. Unless special interests, particularly financial interests, were operating among relatives, there was no very strong obligation towards relatives outside the parental families of husband and wife. Even towards siblings there was often very little feeling of social obligation. These families were very much less subject to social control by their relatives than the

Ns, partly because they saw less of them, but also because the network of kin was dispersed so that its various members were less likely to share the same opinions and values.

In brief, the networks of these families were less highly connected than that of the Ns: many of their friends did not know one another, it was unusual for friends to know relatives, only a few relatives kept in touch with one another, and husband and wife had very little contact with neighbors. Furthermore, there was no sharp segregation between the wife's network and the husband's network. With the exception of a few old friends and some colleagues, husband and wife maintained joint external relationships.

#### CONJUGAL ROLE-SEGREGATION

As described above, these families had as little segregation as possible in their external relationships. There was a similar tendency towards joint organization in domestic tasks and child care. It was felt that efficient management demanded some division of labor, particularly after the children had been born; there had to be a basic differentiation between the husband's role as primary breadwinner and the wife's role as mother of young children. But in other respects such division of labor as existed was felt to be more a matter of convenience than of inherent differences between the sexes. The division of labor was flexible, and there was considerable helping and interchanging of tasks. Husbands were expected to take a very active part in child care. Financial affairs were managed jointly, and joint consultation was expected on all major decisions.

Husbands were expected to provide much of the help that Mrs. N was able to get from her female relatives. The wives of these families with dispersed networks were carrying a tremendous load of housework and child care, but they expected to carry it for a shorter time than Mrs. N. Relatives sometimes helped these wives, but only occasionally; they usually lived at some distance so that it was difficult for them to provide continuous assistance. Cleaning women were employed by four families and a children's nurse by one; all families would have hired more domestic help if they could have afforded it. In spite of their affection for their children, all five couples were looking forward to the time when their children were older and the burden of work would decrease. So far as they could see ahead they did not expect to provide continuous assistance to their married children.

In the case of Mrs. N and other wives with highly connected networks, the burden of housework and child care is more evenly distributed throughout the lifetime of the wife; when she is a girl she helps her mother with the younger children; when she herself has children, her mother and other female relatives help her; when she is a grandmother she helps her daughters.



## ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE-RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

Among the families with dispersed networks, there were frequent discussions of whether there really were any psychological or temperamental differences between the sexes. These differences were not simply taken for granted as they were by the Ns. In some cases, so much stress was placed on shared interests and sexual equality (which was sometimes confused with identity, the notion of equality of complementary opposites being apparently a difficult idea to maintain consistently) that one sometimes felt that the possibility of the existence of social and temperamental differences between the sexes was being denied. In other cases, temperamental differences between the sexes were exaggerated to a point that belied the couple's actual joint activities and the whole pattern of shared interests that they felt to be so fundamental to their way of life. Quite frequently the same couple would minimize differences between the sexes on one occasion and exaggerate them on another. Sometimes these discussions about sexual differences were very serious; sometimes they were witty and facetious; but they were never neutral—they were felt to be an important problem. Such discussions may be interpreted as an attempt to air and to resolve the contradiction between the necessity for joint organization with its ethic of equality on the one hand, and the necessity for differentiation and recognition of sexual differences on the other. "After all," as one husband said, to conclude the discussion, "*vive la différence*, or where would we all be?"

It was felt that, in a good marriage, husband and wife should achieve a high degree of compatibility, based on their own particular combination of shared interests and complementary differences. Their relationship with each other should be more important than any separate relationship with outsiders. The conjugal relationship should be kept private, and revelations to outsiders, or letting down one's spouse in public, were felt to be serious offenses. A successful sexual relationship was felt by these couples to be very important for a happy marriage: it was as if successful sexual relations were felt to prove that all was well with the joint relationship, whereas unsatisfactory relations were indicative of a failure in the total relationship. In some cases one almost got the feeling that these husbands and wives felt a moral obligation to enjoy sexual relations, a feeling not expressed or suggested by the Ns.

The wives of these families seemed to feel that their position was rather difficult. They had certainly wanted children, and in all five cases they were getting a great deal of satisfaction from their maternal role. But at the same time, they felt tied down by their children and they did not like the inevitable drudgery associated with child care. Some were more affected than others, but most of them complained of isolation, boredom and fatigue. "You must excuse me if I sound half-witted. I've been talking to the children all day," was

a not uncommon remark. These women wanted a career or some special interest that would make them feel that they were something more than children's nurses and housemaids. They wanted more joint entertainment with their husbands and more contact with friends. These complaints were not leveled specifically at their husbands—indeed in most cases they felt that their husbands were doing their best to make the situation easier—but against the social situation in which they found themselves and at the difficulty of satisfying contradictory desires at the same time. One wife summed it up by saying, "Society seems to be against married women. I don't know, it's all very difficult."

It may be felt that the problem could be solved if such a family moved to an area that was felt to be homogeneous and composed of people similar to themselves, for then the wife might be able to find friends among her neighbors and would feel less isolated and bored. It is difficult to imagine, however, that these families could feel that any local area, however homogeneous by objective criteria, could be full of potential friends, for their experience of moving about in the past and their varied social contacts make them very discriminating in their choice of friends. Further, their dislike of having their privacy broken into by neighbors is very deeply rooted; it diminishes after the children start playing with children in the neighborhood, but it never disappears entirely.

### *Intermediate Degrees of Conjugal Role-Segregation and Network Connectedness*

There were nine families of this type in the research set. There was considerable variety of occupation amongst them. Four husbands had professional or semi-professional occupations very similar to the occupations of the second type of family described above. It was in recognition of the fact that these four families were similar in occupation but different in conjugal role-segregation from the second set of families that I concluded that conjugal role-segregation could not be attributed to occupational level alone. Of the five remaining husbands, one was a clerical worker, three had manual occupations similar in general level to that of Mr. N and one changed from a highly skilled manual job to an office job after the interviewing was completed.

There was considerable variation among these nine families in conjugal role-segregation. Some tended to have a fairly marked degree of segregation, approaching that of the Ns, whereas others were closer to the second set of families in having a relatively joint role-relationship. These variations in degree of segregation of conjugal roles within the nine intermediate families did not follow exactly the order according to occupational level. If the occupa-

tions of the husbands are arranged in order from the most joint to the most segregated conjugal role-relationship, the order is as follows: manual worker, professional, professional, clerical worker, professional, manual worker, professional, manual worker, manual worker. The variations in degree of segregation follow more closely the variations in degree of network connectedness. The families with the most dispersed networks had the most joint role-relationships, and the families with the most connected networks had the most conjugal role-segregation. The families with the most dispersed networks were those who had moved around a great deal so that they had established relationships with many people who did not know one another.

For brevity of description, I shall treat these nine intermediate families collectively, but it should be remembered that there were variations in degree amongst them, and that both network connectedness and conjugal role-segregation form continua so that it is somewhat arbitrary to divide families into separate types.

#### EXTERNAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The data suggest two possible reasons for the intermediate degree in the connectedness of the networks of these families. First, most of them had been brought up in families whose networks had been less connected than that of the Ns, but more connected than that of the second set of families. With one exception these couples had moved around less than the second type of family both before and after marriage, so that more of their friends knew one another; several had had considerable continuity of relationships since childhood, and they had not developed the pattern of ignoring neighbors and relying chiefly on friends and colleagues that was described as typical of families with very dispersed networks.

Secondly, these families were living in areas where they felt that many of the neighbors were socially similar to themselves. In four cases these were suburban areas; in five cases they were mixed working-class areas in which the inhabitants were felt to be similar to one another in general occupational level although they worked at different jobs. Five families were living in or near the area where one or both of the partners had lived since childhood. In two of the remaining four cases, the area was similar to the one in which husband and wife had been brought up. In two cases, the present area differed considerably from the childhood area of one or other partner, but the couple had acclimatized themselves to the new situation.

If the husband and wife were living in the area in which they had been brought up, each was able to keep up some of the relationships that had been

formed before marriage. This was also true of the Ns. The intermediate families differed from the Ns chiefly in that their jobs, and in some cases their education, had led them to make relationships with people who were not neighbors. Many neighbors were friends, but not all friends were neighbors. Even in the case of families in which one or both partners had moved to the area after marriage, each partner was able to form friendly relationships with at least some of the neighbors, who were in most cases felt to be socially similar to the couple themselves. Husband and wife were able to form independent, segregated relationships with neighbors. In particular, many of the wives spent a good deal of their leisure time during the day with neighboring women. Husband and wife also joined local clubs, most of these clubs being unisexual. (Voluntary associations appear to thrive best in areas where people are similar in social status but do not know one another well; the common activity gives people an opportunity to get to know one another better.)

In local areas inhabited by the intermediate families, many of the neighbors knew one another. There was not the very great familiarity built up over a long period of continuous residence as for the Ns, but there was not the standoffishness described as typical of the families with very dispersed networks. The intermediate families had networks of neighbors that were midway in degree of connectedness, and the husbands and wives were midway in sensitivity to the opinions of neighbors—more susceptible than the second set of families, but better able to maintain their privacy than the Ns.

Husbands and wives had some segregated relationships with neighbors, but they could also make joint relationships if all four partners liked one another. Some relationships were usually kept up with friends who had been made outside the area. Couples usually tried to arrange joint visits with these friends. These friends usually did not become intimate with the neighbors, however, so that the network remained fairly dispersed.

Relations with relatives were much like those described above for the second set of families. But if the relatives were living in the same local area as the family, there was considerable visiting and exchange of services, and if the relatives lived close to one another, the kinship network was fairly well connected.

The networks of these families were thus less highly connected than that of the Ns, but more highly connected than that of the second set of families. There was some overlapping of roles. Neighbors were sometimes friends; some relatives were both neighbors and friends. The overlapping was not as complete as it was with the Ns, but there was not the complete division into separate categories—friend, neighbor, relative—that was characteristic of the second set of families. The networks of husband and wife were less segregated than those of the Ns, but more segregated than those of the second set of families.

## CONJUGAL ROLE-SEGREGATION

In external relationships, husband and wife had some joint relationships, particularly with relatives and with friends, and some segregated relationships, particularly with neighbors and local clubs.

In carrying out household tasks and child care, there was a fairly well-defined division of labor, a little more clearly marked than in the second type of family, more flexible than in the case of the Ns. Husbands helped, but there was a greater expectation of help from neighbors and relatives (if they lived close enough) than among the second set of families.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE-RELATIONSHIP OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

Although there were variations of degree, considerable stress was placed on the importance of shared interests and joint activities for a happy marriage. In general, the greater the stress that was placed on joint organization and shared interests, the greater was the importance attached to sexual relations. Like the families with dispersed networks, the intermediate families stressed the necessity for conjugal privacy and the precedence of the conjugal relationship over all external relationships, but there was a greater tolerance of social and temperamental differences between the sexes, and there was an easier acceptance of segregation in the activities of husband and wife. Wives often wanted some special interest of their own, other than housework and children, but they were able to find activities such as attending evening classes or local clubs that could be carried on without interfering with their housework and child care. And because, in most cases, they felt that at least some of the neighboring women were similar to themselves, they found it relatively easy to make friends among them, and they had people to talk to during the day. They complained less frequently of isolation and boredom than did the wives in families with very dispersed networks.

*Transitional Families*

There were five families in varying states of transition from one type of network to another. Two phases of transition can be distinguished: families who were in the process of deciding to move from one local area to another, a decision that was requiring considerable restructuring of their networks, and somewhat de-socialized families who had radically changed their pattern of external relationships and had not yet got used to their new situation. There

were other families who had gone through the process of transition and had more or less settled down to the pattern typical of families with dispersed or intermediate networks.

#### FAMILIES IN THE PROCESS OF DECIDING TO MOVE

There were two such families. Both had relatively highly connected networks, and both had been socially mobile and were contemplating moving to suburban areas, which would be more compatible with their new social status. In both cases this meant cutting off old social ties with relatives and neighbors and building up new ones. One couple seemed to feel too bound to the old network to make the break; they also said they did not want to lower their current standard of living by spending a lot of money on a house. The second family moved after the interviewing was completed, and a brief return visit suggested that they would in time build up the intermediate type of network and conjugal role-segregation.

#### SOMEWHAT DE-SOCIALIZED FAMILIES

There were three families of this type. All three had been brought up in highly connected networks similar to the Ns, and all had moved away from their old areas and the people of their networks. For such a family, any move outside the area is a drastic step. This contrasts with the intermediate families who are not too upset by moving, provided that they move to an area of people who are felt to be socially similar to themselves.

One family had been very mobile occupationally, although they had moved primarily because of the requirements of the husband's occupation rather than to find a neighborhood compatible with their achieved status. They were living in relative isolation, with very few friends, almost no contacts with neighbors and very little contact with relatives, most of whom were living at a considerable distance. They seemed to be a bit stunned by the change in their immediate environment. They had some segregated interests, but they felt that joint organization and shared interests were the best basis of a conjugal relationship.

The other two families were working-class and had not been occupationally mobile. They were particularly important to the conceptual analysis of conjugal role-segregation for, although they were similar to the Ns in occupational level and in general cultural background, their conjugal role-relationship was more joint. It was their relatively dispersed networks that distinguished them from the Ns.

These two families had moved to a different local area because they could

not find suitable accommodation in their old neighborhoods. They also wanted the amenities of a modern flat, and since their parents had died and many of their relatives had moved away, they felt that their main ties to the old local area were gone. Both seemed to feel that they were strangers in a land full of people who were all strangers to one another, and at first they did not know how to cope with the situation. They did not react to their new situation in exactly the same way. In both cases, husband and wife had turned to one another for help, especially at first, but for various personal reasons, one husband and wife were making a concerted effort to develop joint activities and shared interests, whereas the other couple did not take to the idea of a joint role-relationship with any enthusiasm.

In the first case, husband and wife tried to develop more joint relationships with friends, but this was difficult for them because they had had so little practice; they did not know the culture of a joint role-relationship, and their new acquaintances were in a similar predicament so that they got little external support for their efforts. The husband tried to get his wife to join in his club activities, but the structure of the club was such that her activities remained somewhat segregated from his. The husband helped his wife extensively with household tasks and child care, although he continued to plan the family finances. In the second case, the husband busied himself with his work and friends and spent a great deal of time on various committees with other men; his wife was becoming isolated and withdrawn into the home. They had more joint organization of domestic tasks than they had had before; she urged him to help her because her female relatives lived too far away to be of much assistance.

In both cases, however, nothing could really take the place of the old networks built up from childhood, and both couples felt a good deal of personal dissatisfaction. The husbands were perhaps less drastically affected, since they continued to work at their old jobs and their relationships with colleagues gave them considerable continuity. Both husband and wife often blamed their physical surroundings for their malaise, and they idealized their old local areas. They remembered only the friendliness and forgot the physical inconvenience and the unpleasant part of the gossip. On the whole, although one family had carried the process further than the other, both seemed to be developing a more joint division of labor than that which they had had before, and it seemed likely that they would eventually settle down in some intermediate form of network connectedness and conjugal role-segregation.

The research set did not contain any families who had moved in the other direction, that is, from a dispersed to a more connected network. But personal knowledge of families who had been accustomed to a dispersed network and were having to come to grips with a fairly highly connected one suggests that this type of change is also felt to be somewhat unpleasant. The privacy of

husband and wife is encroached upon, and each is expected to take part in segregated activities, a state of affairs that they regard as provincial. These families could have refused to enter into the local network of social relationships, but in most cases they felt that the husband's career required it.

### *The Relationship Between Conjugal Role-Segregation and Network Connectedness*

Connected networks are most likely to develop when husband and wife, together with their friends, neighbors and relatives, have all grown up in the same local area and have continued to live there after marriage. Husband and wife come to the marriage each with his or her own highly connected network. It is very likely that there will be some overlap of their networks; judging by the Ns' account of their genealogy, one of the common ways for husband and wife to meet each other is to be introduced by a person who is simultaneously a friend of one and a relative of the other.

Each partner makes a considerable emotional investment in relationships with the people in his network; each is engaged in reciprocal exchanges of material and emotional support with them; each is very sensitive to their opinions and values, not only because the relationships are intimate, but also because the people in the network know one another and share the same values so that they are able to apply consistent informal sanctions to one another.

The marriage is superimposed on these pre-existing relationships. As long as the couple continue to live in the same area, and as long as their friends, neighbors and relatives also continue to live within easy reach of the family and of one another, the segregated networks of husband and wife can be carried on after marriage. Some rearrangement is necessary; the husband is likely to stop seeing some of the friends of his youth, particularly those who work at a different place and go to different pubs and clubs; after children are born, the wife is likely to see less of her former girl friends and more of her mother and other female relatives. But apart from these readjustments, husband and wife can carry on their old external relationships, and they continue to be very sensitive to external social controls. In spite of the conjugal segregation in external relationships, the overlapping of the networks of husband and wife tends to ensure that each partner finds out about the other's activities. Although a wife may not know directly what a husband does with his friends away from home, one of the other men is likely to tell his wife or some other female relative who eventually passes the information on, either directly or through other women. Similarly any defection on the part of the wife is likely to be made known to her husband.

Because old relationships can be continued after marriage, both husband