

PERMANENT AVAILABILITY FOR MARRIAGE:

CONSIDERATIONS OF THE CANADIAN CASE

by

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ABSTRACT

The permanent availability model (PAM) of the family is an ideal type of family organization based on the premise that every adult in a society is permanently available to be a marriage mate for every other cross-sex adult, regardless of his or her current marital status. This ideal type is discussed with reference to its antithesis, the orderly replacement model (ORM). It is suggested that all family systems can be ordered on a continuum ranging from ORM to PAM and that changes in the Canadian family system can heuristically be interpreted as a movement towards the PAM. Supporting data involving changes in attitudes, legal reforms, and changes in behaviours are presented for six integrants of the model: 1) increasingly reversible marriage; 2) singular identities for married persons; 3) emphasis on bilateral descent; 4) increasing heterogamy; 5) declining fertility; and 6) increasing economic independence. The predisposition towards serial monogamy is discussed in terms of complicating factors such as unbalanced sex ratios and AIDS, of redefinitions of eligibles, and of divorce decision making. Implications of these trends for the immediate future include increased fragility of marriage and a general individuation of society.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT:

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Table 1. Models of Family Organization: Farber's Ideal Types

Integragnt	Orderly Replacement Model (ORM)	Permanent Availability Model (PAM)
<u>NATURE OF MARRIAGE</u>		
Marriageability	Absolute status: reserved for never-married (virgin) persons	Relative status: reserved for persons not currently married
Nature of marriage contract	Individual with God, represented by the state.	Individual with individual.
Family dissolution	Low divorce rates, no remarriage	High divorce rates, high remarriage rates
<u>FAMILY IDENTITIES</u>		
Social unit	Male's identity shared with "his" wife and children	Singular identity for husband and wife
Marital status	High visibility	Low visibility
<u>LINEAGE</u>		
Descent	Unilateral	Bilateral
Illegitimacy	Low, socially significant	High, socially irrelevant
Place of residence	Patrilocal	Neolocal
<u>FAMILY FORMATION</u>		
Mate selection	Arranged marriages	"Free" mate selection
Homogeneity	Usually homogamous	Often heterogamous
Social import	Closed system: conservative source of continuity.	Open system: source of cultural change.
<u>PROCREATION</u>		
Pronatalism	Obligatory parenthood for extended family	Optional parenthood for personal gratification
Fertility	High--no access or low access to birth control	Low--free access to birth control

Table 19. Summary of Legal Changes Relating to Move Toward PAM

Integragnt	Legal Change
REVERSIBLE MARRIAGE	Divorce Act (1969) Law Reform Commission of Canada (1975) Family Law Reform Amendments: elimination of breach of promise Divorce and Corollary Relief Act
SEPARATE LEGAL IDENTITIES	Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1985) Wife's right to own domicile Wife's right to choose own name Wife abuse deemed assault Provision for marital "rape"
BILATERAL DESCENT	Elimination of illegitimacy as a legal status Provision for "best interest of child" Move towards joint custody Provision for mother's surname for children
CONTROL OF REPRODUCTION	Legalization of contraception (1969) Liberalization of abortion (1969 and 1988) Badgley Commission (1984)
ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE	Married Women's Property Act (1884) Partnership of Acquests (Quebec) Murdock v. Murdock (1974) Family Law Reform Act (Nfld., 1978) Family Law Reform Act (P.E.I., 1978) Family Law Reform Act (Ont. 1980) Marital Property Act (N.B., 1980) An Act to Establish a New Civil Code and to Reform Family Law (Quebec) Acceptance of Domestic Contracts

FAMILY MAINTENANCE

Family maintenance

Concern of the
extended family:
extensive support

Concern of the nuclear
family: minimum
support

Gender roles

Husband only in
labour force: sole
provider role

Women in labour force:
shared provider roles

Table 20. Summary of Demographic and Social Changes Congruent with Societal Move Towards PAM

Integrant	Direction of Change	Table
REVERSIBLE MARRIAGE	Increase in age at marriage	2
	Increase in cohabitation	3
	Increase in living alone	4
	Decrease in marriage rates	5
	Increase in divorce	6
	Decrease in nullity	
	Increase in remarriage	7
	Increase in civil ceremonies	8
SINGULAR IDENTITIES	Decreased tolerance of domestic violence and rape	
	Decreased adoption of husband's surname	9
	Increase in commuter marriages	
	Increase non-marital households	
	Increased use of Ms. v. Mrs.	
	Decreased use of wedding rings	
BILATERAL DESCENT	Increase in illegitimacy	10
	Decrease in illegitimate adoptions	
	Decrease in patronymic naming	
	Increase in joint custody	
	Increase in father custody	11
HETEROGAMY	Increase racial heterogamy	
	Increase religious heterogamy	12
	Increase ethnic heterogamy	
	Increase wife-older marriages	
	Increase in WASP marriages	
CONTROLLED PROCREATION	Increase in contraceptive use	
	Increase in sterilization	13
	Increase in abortions	14
	Decrease in fertility	15
	Increase in childlessness	16
ECONOMIC SINGULARITY	Increase women in work force	17
	Increase mothers in work force	18
	Decrease Children in Divorce	19