Patterns of Spousal Accommodation and Conflict in Traditional and Modern Farm Families

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Précis: This paper reports the results of interviews with a random sample of 408 couples operating family farms in the West of Ireland. Attention is focused on the extent of cosensus on values between husbands and wives, the process of accommodation to each other's values, as well as some of the bases of conflict of values that occurs as families modernise. In the light of these results, the relative validity and utility of a number of theoretical orientations in family sociology are assessed.

I INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of this paper is to examine the relative validity and heuristic value of two models of spousal interaction — the "consensus on role expectations" and the "tension management" models — in analysing and interpreting spousal interaction patterns in rural Ireland. In Section II the development of anthropological models of spousal integration in Irish farm families from the 1930s to the present is discussed and certain hypotheses about spousal integration are proposed. In Sections III and IV the results from interviews with 408 farmers and their wives in the West of Ireland are presented in an attempt to determine which of the two dominant theories of spousal interaction best fits the data. Attention is focused on

(a) the nature and extent of consensus or level of accommodation between husbands and wives on their goals and satisfactions, and (b) the relationship between this and the nature and extent of spousal integration. The conclusions are put forward in Section V with some implications for future research in this area.

II TWO VIEWPOINTS ON SPOUSAL INTERACTION

When Arensberg and Kimball's (1940) study of family and kin system in rural Ireland first appeared, structural functionalism as a theoretical orientation was still being established in sociology. Indeed, their work played a considerable part in this process. When Humphrey's (1966) work, therefore, appeared, it is not surprising that a somewhat modified version of functionalism still held sway and is clearly exemplified in it.

Within the functionalist framework the family is seen as a balanced and complementary system of interpersonal relations based on widely accepted and shared values, normatively prescribed roles and the maintenance of a steady equilibrated state. Conflict and disagreements within the family are seen in terms of disorganisation. This could arise either from disagreements about role expectations or from failures to live up to expectations. Both of these ultimately arise from "failures" in socialisation. In other words, disagreement is seen in terms of temporary aberrations or of explicitly deviant behavioural patterns (Pitts, 1968; Broderick, 1971; Demerath and Peterson, 1967).

Arensberg and Kimball's description of the typical structure of family relationships in the County Clare of the early 1930s still remains one of the most typically quoted characterisations of peasant family systems — one with a clearly demarcated division of labour along the dimensions of age and sex roles, an explicitly patriarchical authority pattern (but with considerable autonomy for the farm wife in her farm and household roles) and with a particular kind of emotional economy which was non-expressive, except in the relationship of the mother to her children.

The extreme position held within this view was one of a completely balanced and deeply institutionalised set of family roles for which people were sufficiently socialised that most of them "found reward and pleasure" in performing them (Arensberg and Kimball, p. 46). The basis of conflict within this perspective is normative — located in basic disagreements over role expectations, etc., or failures to live up to widely accepted expectations. The consequence of conflict was seen in negative terms as disorganisation, deviance, etc.

"Consensus" primarily meant reciprocal agreement between husband and wife, as well as parents and children, on the legitimacy of highly differen-

tiated roles within the family — the wife-mother's, the husband-father's, son's and daughter's, etc. Consensus does not mean (except in the very particular circumstances mentioned later) that husbands and wives pursue the same values or objectives in marriage. Indeed, in the traditional family, for instance, it would mean that while wives would emphasise their maternal and social-emotional functions, their husbands would give priority to their provider and authority-control functions, and both their satisfactions would flow from these priorities. As a consequence of these highly differentiated roles and, given the nature of the emotional economy within traditional farm families, the causes, nature and course of conflict will be very different than in "modern" families (see Hannan and Katsiaouni, 1977).

The family seen as a tension or conflict management system is a view which only came into prominence in the 1960s (Coser, 1956; Moore, 1963; Spiegel, 1968; Sprey, 1969). Here inconsistencies and disagreements about the valued goals or ends of family life, about role allocation, and about the distribution of decision-making or control functions are "normal". And lack of full acquiescense to, or felt difficulties in fulfilling, role obligations, even where these are regarded as justifiable expectations, frequently occurs (Goode, 1960). Interpersonal relationships, within this view, are built up through a cumulative series of role bargains within which each person seeks to maximise his or her own utilities or satisfactions and minimise his or her "role strain" (ibid; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Sprey, 1969). Here the family is seen as a conflict or tension management system. The problem arises when conflicts remain unresolved, given that they occur frequently and that they are not necessarily "deviant" when they do (Peterson, 1969, p. 89).

In this latter view, therefore, the family process is seen as an ongoing tension management or peace-making process "which may result in a negotiated order, a state of affairs which remains, however, open to continuous re-negotiation" (Sprey, 1969, p. 202). The problem here is the presence and efficiency of an interpersonal communication and conflict management mechanism, a negotiating arrangement which is mutually understood and procedurally unproblematic and which allows for the mobilisation of people's abilities and commitments to handling problems that divide them.

Both Leyton's (1966 and 1975) and Messenger's (1969) work lie more comfortably within this second perspective. As Messenger sees it, for instance, in the "traditional" farm family of the 1960s the harmonisation of sex roles and the level of accommodation to them is not that complete: "Women commonly express jealousy of, and resentment against, not only what they consider to be the less time-consuming and stressful work-load of men, but also the greater freedom enjoyed by their husbands" (op. cit., p. 77). At the same time, their husbands seemed completely unaware of these sentiments and "cited as one of the more attractive aspects of local life their

being bossed by no one and being able to shift from one job to another among a wide variety to avoid boredom" (ibid., p. 77).

In Leyton's (1966) work on interpersonal conflict in a small rural community in Ulster, the greatest proportion of disputes occurred amongst family members — between spouses and between fathers and sons usually, and amongst the primary kin — that is, conflict was more characteristic of family and kin systems than other primary group systems. Leyton provides the most extensive description of the characteristics of family and kinship conflict in Ireland. Here two patterns of overt conflict appear to be most characteristic of family and kin systems — explicit argument or exchange of verbal abuse, and "withdrawal" or avoidance where "social relations are actually severed and cooperation withdrawn" (Leyton, 1966, p. 537). The disputants ignore or withdraw from relationship with each other by not talking to each other directly or by using intermediaries when they have to relate to each other. The latter is the predominant pattern within the family.

Messenger also stresses avoidance as the main mechanism of persistent conflict "management" or accommodation within the family and kin group. As he puts it, "the parties involved limit as much as possible both contact and cooperation between themselves rather than resort to abusive argument. Physical assault is unusual, but the repressed wish to perpetuate violence may be widespread" (op. cit., p. 77).

What both authors are describing here is not so much a mechanism of conflict management as of accommodation to persistent unresolved conflicts between family members. Even in this case it appears too extreme to call the pattern "withdrawal", because even in the worst cases known to the author where such extreme interpersonal avoidance exists, indirect co-operation still persists by largely fulfilling one's roles in the overall familial division of labour and also by using intermediaries to communicate directly or indirectly with one another (Hannan, 1972, p. 175).

However, such a pattern of conflict management can logically occur only where rather "traditional" patterns of spousal and parent-child relationships exist. The operation of a family unit sharing the same household and operating a farm family economy in a situation where husband and wife do not talk to each other and where certain parent-child alliances and persistent conflict divide the family members from each other can logically persist only where (a) a very clearcut and deeply institutionalised division of labour, based on the ascriptive axes of sex and age, exists, (b) where each spouse enjoys considerable autonomy in his or her own task roles, and (c) where the affective-emotional dimension of the spousal relationship has not got the priority accorded it in modern marriages.

It is quite clear from the other ethnographic material of Messenger and Leyton that such a clearly differentiated system of roles did exist, but that

its legitimacy was quite clearly in doubt, especially amongst women. This pattern is quite evident also in Hannan and Katsiaouni's (1977) study. Here half the wives in the most traditionally structured families were highly dis-satisfied with their roles. "Withdrawal", therefore, could work quite effici-ently as a conflict management technique within a traditionally legitimated system, but would come increasingly under emotional strain as the legitimacy of that system declined.

Withdrawal cannot be a lasting solution in "modern" families where such a neat division of tasks and emotional functions does not exist. The system would quickly break down in the absence of discussion and mutual accom-modation or the crude imposition of one person's will on that of another. In the absence of some more active conflict resolution arrangement, inter-personal relationships could only be maintained with great emotional costs.

The conflict or tension management perspective is more appropriate to the more "modern" family system. It views tensions and strains as endemic. Conflict is not a deviant or occasional outburst, but an inevitable part of a process of role bargaining (Moore, 1963; Sprey, 1969). Within this perspective the negotiated order of relationships is maintained by an ongoing process of tension management or of resigned accommodation to potentially inevit-able disagreement and ongoing conflicts by the weaker partner.

For interaction to continue or interpersonal relationships to persist, it is not always necessary for tensions to be openly resolved or states of positive interpersonal feeling or support to be restored, or even for the level of indiv-idual unhappiness to be reduced. At the worst, families may live together because, under the particular social constraints operating, they have no other choice (Spiegel, 1968). Here it is not the case that people are unhappy be-cause deep differences and disagreements divide husband from wife or chil-dren from parents, but that the participants are unwilling or unable to come to terms with their differences. As we have pointed out, the typical tradi-tional pattern of response was one of interpersonal avoidance or withdrawal. But this becomes less and less viable as an adaptive pattern as the tradition-ally institutionalised system breaks down. As a result, the position of the aggrieved partner − usually, but not always, the wife − has, paradoxically, become even more unpleasant as values become more modernised.

At the best, no serious disagreements occur over values or goals or about the legitimacy of the particular social arrangements involved. At one extreme, the traditional allocation of sex roles in terms of tasks, decision-making and social-emotional functions is highly legitimated. In the "modern" system, a process of negotiated or consultative decision-making exists in which the different viewpoints or utilities may be discussed. This is facilitated by an open, articulate communication system and an accommodative interpersonal negotiating strategy. Such a communication process minimises the probability

of serious differences of opinion growing into interpersonal grudges and maximises the probability of resolving conflicting goals or other disagreements.

The vast majority of families nowadays must frequently experience moderate to serious disagreement, whether it be parent-child, husband-wife or sibling-sibling disagreements. The degree of consensus on day-to-day role obligations cannot be so high that no serious questioning of them exists. Nor is the basic ideological grounding for most operating sex- and age-based roles — even if we accept a high degree of role integration — likely to be so deeply rooted and so consistently reinforced in interaction that everybody willingly and unquestioningly acts to fulfil role expectations. Nevertheless, most families exhibit a sufficient degree of co-operation and mutual accommodation to live together in relative harmony. Of course, spouses vary in their degree of personal commitment, or in the extent of their willingness to sacrifice or compromise on personal goals, to accommodate those of their spouse. And it is probable that compromise is more likely to be characteristic of wives than husbands.

The discussion above can only be considered as a *post-hoc* interpretation of changes in some of the underlying bases, as well as the patterns, of conflict within "traditional" and "modern" farm families. What is proposed in the rest of the paper is to go beyond this and, to some extent, test the validity of some of the hypothesised trends and relationships. The relevant data are drawn from a very comprehensive interview study conducted in 1971 of interaction patterns in farm families. In that study some very detailed, though not very extensive, data were gathered on various aspects of wives' and husbands' ideals, feelings, and levels of "successful" conflict resolution.

The following non-formalised hypotheses are proposed, their purpose being to direct the analysis toward an explication of the meaning of consensus and of the consequences of different types of consensus for conflict or integration.

(i) As it might be naïvely expressed, a consensus view emphasises the need for agreement on common goals in any co-operative enterprise. The possibilities of reciprocal or mutually accommodative goal-seeking has frequently been ignored. In the "normal" traditional family the mutual ideal expectations ("values") of husbands and wives are different, but reciprocally balanced. In this kind of family, wives emphasise the parental and, to a very limited extent, the spousal relationship while husbands emphasise the instrumental/status aspects of the relationship. This is the well-known phenomenon of sex-role differentiation that occurs in traditional family structures. As a result, we would not expect high levels of dissatisfaction or spousal alienation to occur in these families. On the other hand, it has been shown in a previous paper (Hannan and Katsiaouni, 1977) that the highest level of

wives' dissatisfaction occurs where husbands maintain, or even enforce, a pattern of highly traditional task roles, decision-making and social-emotional roles, where wives' values do not support such a system.

(ii) Contrariwise, in well-adjusted "modern" families the pursuit of goals of spousal companionship, supportiveness and mutual love requires such a mutuality. Consequently, if high priority is given to spousal goals/values by one spouse and not by the other, one would expect low levels of spousal integration.

(iii) In the process of value changes from "traditional" to "modern" patterns of spousal and familial relationships, one would expect that wives would be far more likely to play an active role in working towards their aims. As we shall see, wives are more likely to assign priority to spousal values. What we are suggesting here, however, is that they will also be more likely to work more actively than husbands to achieve these valued ends in marriage.

(iv) Given what is proposed in (i) to (iii) above, we would expect the most serious conflict to emerge where (a) husbands have "outrun" their wives in the degree of "modernity" of their ideal expectations from marriage, and (b) husbands give very low priority to spousal values while wives assign them highest priority.

(v) Least conflict and most satisfaction is most likely to occur in families where both spouses assign highest priority to spousal values.

(vi) "Withdrawal" as a pattern of conflict management or resolution is a manageable option only in traditionally structured families. The cultural-social structural or even social-psychological prerequisites for its successful operation cannot exist in modern family conditions.

III DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE AND VARIABLES

A systematic sample of 408 farmers and their wives were interviewed in early 1971 in the small farm counties of Clare, Kerry, all of Connaught, and the three Ulster counties. The interviews were carried out simultaneously with each husband and wife. The interview dealt mainly with details of family and kinship interaction and with certain details of the operation of the farm and household economy. The survey is described in detail in Hannan and Katsiaouni (1977, pp. 31—52).

In this paper we are concerned with only two types of data gathered — (i) the priority assigned by both sets of respondents to different goals or values in family life and the relative order of satisfaction with or enjoyment of different aspects of family life, and (ii) a number of measures of wives' level of satisfaction with their husbands' roles in the family and a set of measures which attempted to tap the overall level of mutual spousal supportiveness.

III.1 PRIORITY IN GOALS AND SATISFACTIONS

The relative priority attached to different values in marriage and family life was measured by asking respondents to rank-order eight different statements which expressed desirable marital and familial states. These eight statements were selected to represent three different relationships or role-sets within the family — the spousal relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the family-community relationship. The question asked of respondents and the eight statements they were asked to rank-order are now explained. Extensive pretests had indicated that these statements were meaningful and that respondents could validly discriminate amongst them.

"How would you rank. . . the following eight statements about marriage and family life . . . in terms of their importance to you — of the things you want most out of marriage and family life. Start with the three most important, the three things you want most out of family life, and mark them off as 1, 2, 3, ...".

A. To have an understanding husband (wife) who is considerate and concerned with his wife's (her husband's) problems and feelings.
B. To have many children to enjoy.
C. To have a husband and wife who are good companions and who enjoy doing things together.
D. To have parents and children who get on well together and who are happy with one another.
E. To have both husband and wife doing their best and pulling well together for the good of the family.
F. To have a good united family that is well thought of in the community.
G. To have a good standard of living and no serious money worries.
H. To have the children get on well in life and be a credit to the family.

In a later section of the interview respondents were again asked to rank-order these eight dimensions in terms of the "aspects of marriage and family life which gave you most satisfaction or most enjoyment". Items had to be suitably re-phrased (e.g., "The companionship of doing things together with your husband", etc). Items were also randomly re-ordered to distinguish them from the first series.

For the purpose of analysis, the responses have been arranged into three ordinal categories in terms of the priority given to (1) spousal, (2) parental and (3) status or consumption goals. Items A and C were categorised as "spousal", B, D and E as "parental", and F, G and H as "status-consumption" goals. Concentrating on the three items given highest priority in "goals" or "satisfactions", if any two items within any of these categories were signified,

the respondent was categorised according to the category of goals/satisfactions indicated. Ninety per cent of all respondents could be coded by this rather stringent rule, indicating a rather high level of face validity and reliability for the technique. The remaining ten per cent of respondents were categorised on the basis of the item given highest priority.[1] The following table summarises the results obtained.

Table 1: *Similarities and differences in priorities of family values and of "satisfactions" amongst husbands and wives*

Kind of goals (satisfactions) given as most important *	Relative priority in goals/ values in family life		Relative priority in satisfactions actually enjoyed in family life	
	Wives'* Responses	Husbands'* Responses	Wives'* Responses	Husbands'* Responses
	%	%	%	%
Spousal	51	45	42	38
Parental or familial	29	28	43	43
Status or consumption	19	21	11	12
No information	1	1	1	8
Total	100	100	100	100

*Samples of husbands and wives are, of course, completely related samples. Only couples were interviewed.

Roughly half of both spouses gave priority to spousal relationship goals. These respondents usually ranked parental relationships as secondary and put status goals as least important. However, almost one-fifth of respondents had an almost exactly opposite order of priorities — status, parental, and spousal — while the remainder stressed parental and then status or spousal goals. Both the actual values given priority and the ordering of values varied very widely, although the dominant pattern was one assigning most priority to spousal and least to status goals. Somewhat different rankings emerge in response to the question on "those aspects of married or family life which give you most enjoyment or most satisfaction". Here, fewer emphasised both status and spousal satisfactions while parental or overall familial satisfactions were emphasised. Nevertheless, almost equally wide differences

1 The average ranking of wives' responses was as follows: (1) an understanding husband; (2) a good relationship between parents and children; (3) co-operation between husband and wife; (4) spousal companionship; (5) the success in life of the children; (6) a good standard of living; (7) united and integrated family; (8) many children to enjoy. The average ranking for husbands was slightly different relative to wives' ranking; it was as follows: 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, 6, 7, 8.

Table 2: *Percentage distribution of families by the dominant pattern of spousal support*

	Person who is easiest/best to talk to if worried or upset about something				Extent of each spouse's accommodation to disagreements (wife's perceptions)		Terms of reference used spontaneously	By wife for hus.	By hus. for wife
Identity of Person Named	*Person who is easiest to talk to if worried or upset*		*Person who is "best" to talk to*				*Terms*		
	Wife's Resp.	*Hus. Resp.*	*Wife's Resp.*	*Hus. Resp.*		%		%	%
	%	%	%	%	1) Wife is faster to get over disagreements and she usually "gives in" to maintain harmony	30	1) Impersonal or negative	55	49
Spouse	65	71	55	56			2) Spousal but impersonal	3	38
Child(ren)	10	3	6	3	2) Husband is usually faster to "get over" rows, although wife faster to "give in"	33	3) Parental but personal and affectionate	5	1
Primary kin	10	6	16	12					
Other kin					3) Other "mixed" or joint patterns	11	4) Warm spousal on first-name terms	35	9
Neighbours and friends	13	14	17	17	4) Husband is both faster to "get over" rows and he usually "gives in"	14	5) No information	2	3
No information	3	7	6	12	5) No information	12			
Total	100	100	100	100	*Total*	100	*Total*	100	100

exist amongst respondents in their ordering of satisfactions with roughly 40 per cent emphasising spousal, and 40 per cent parental, satisfactions.

III.2 EXTENT OF MUTUAL AFFECTION AND SUPPORT OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

A relatively small number of usually indirect questions were used to measure this dimension of marital integration. Also, a number of indirect observations were made of spouses' verbal behaviour towards each other such as (i) the terms of reference and address used for each other, and (ii) the number of times positive or negative statements were made spontaneously about each other in the course of the interview. Questions were asked of both spouses about the extent of their dependence on each other for emotional support, as well as the extent of emotional support given. Some of the responses are summarised in Table 2.

Up to two-thirds of both husbands and wives show a clear tendency to resort to each other for emotional support when they are upset or worried by something, although this high proportion is considerably reduced as the seriousness of the problem increases. In only one in three families did wives maintain their traditionally submissive, accommodating role in rows or disagreements with their husbands. At the other extreme, in one in seven cases the position was completely reversed and the husband played the submissive and accommodating role. The intermediate patterns varied from joint accommodating behaviour to the absence of a clear pattern of accommodation.

The third column of the table details the pattern of naming observed, used by both spouses for each other. A very clear bias in naming behaviour was observed. While over one in three wives used "warm" parental or spousal terms when referring to their husbands (i.e., a Christian name or an affectionate diminutive), less than one in ten of husbands did so. Husbands tended to use impersonal or "neutral" spousal terms in their place (e.g., "my wife"). Roughly half of both husbands and wives used impersonal, "neutral" or negative terms, usually ones that referred to "parental" or authority roles — "himself" or "herself", "the Boss", etc.

Again, it proved possible to combine these items into a single scale. In fact, a number of Guttman and Likert scales were constructed in an attempt to develop a reliable and valid measure of the overall degree of spousal integration or emotional supportiveness. But they were only moderately successful. The most successful of these is reproduced overleaf.

Roughly 1 in 10 of all couples appear to be almost completely alienated from one another, although up to 40 per cent of spouses were only moderately integrated emotionally. At the other extreme, one in seven couples were very closely integrated. The scale, however, although better and more reliable than any single item, is nevertheless not a very good measure of

Table 3: *Percentage distribution of couples in terms of their degree of spousal integration**

	Likert scale	
Items used	*Score*	*%*
(1) Only warm/affectual spousal terms of reference used for husband in course of interview.	3 (v. high)	15
(2) (1) + husband is both "easiest and best" to talk to if worried or upset.	2	44
(3) Husband is mentioned at least once in respect to 4 different questions about extent of his emotional support for wife when she is in distress.	1	32
Score = 1 if positive in each case Score = 0 if negative in each case	0 (v. low)	10
Total score = 0 to 3.		
Total		100
N		382

*A three-item Likert scale is employed. These 3 items, scored as 1 if positive in each case and 0 if negative, formed a partial Guttman scale in order as given above [C.R. = .89]

spousal integration. It is, therefore, used only as a crude discriminator. It should not be used to make any judgements as to the percentage of couples with "good", "poor" or "middling" marriages. A number of other measures will be employed which attempt to measure wives' feelings about, and evaluations of, their own and their husbands' role performance. Since these have been described in an earlier publication (Hannan and Katsiaouni, 1977), details of their construction will be given in footnotes only.

We do not have good measures of husbands' feelings about, or satisfactions with, family life. Unfortunately, our results and conclusions have, therefore, to be to that extent partial.

IV RESULTS

Results which bear directly on hypotheses (i) to (iv) put forward at the end of Section II above will be presented. However, because each table contains information relevant to more than one of the hypotheses, they cannot be taken in serial order. We have no information which bears directly on hypothesis (vi) (i.e., on the continuing feasibility of "withdrawal" as a conflict management option). The validity of the proposition that such a procedure of handling persistent tensions is no longer a feasible option can only be assessed inferentially after all our data have been presented.

We first take up the matter of consensus on values — its extent, meaning and consequences for interaction. Secondly, we examine the issue of sex differences in social and cultural adaptations to changing sex roles.

IV.1 EXTENT AND MEANING OF CONSENSUS ON GOALS AND VALUES BE-
TWEEN SPOUSES

As we have seen, respondents varied very widely in the priority they attached to eight family and spousal goals presented to them. What we have measured, however, refers only to differences amongst husbands and amongst wives in their values, not to differences between spouses. It could well be that despite this variation, husbands with traditional values were married to traditional wives and that those spouses with "modern" values were equally homogeneously matched.

In measuring the degree of consensus between spouses on values, the most relevant comparisons are the degree of agreement between husband and wife on what their goals should be, as well as what it is that gives them satisfaction in family life. As we can see from the results presented in Table 4 below, there is, in fact, no overall correlation ($r = -.04$) between husbands and wives in the kind of goals given first priority (i.e., spousal, parental, or status) and only a small correlation ($r = +.10$) in the kind of satisfactions given first priority. So variances amongst couples is almost equalled by variances between spouses.

Table 4: *Percentage distribution of couples in terms of the relative priority each spouse attaches to eight family goals and eight family satisfactions*

Husbands' priorities	Priorities in spousal/familial goals Wives Priorities				Priorities in spousal/familial satisfactions Wives' Priorities			
	Status/ Con- sumption	Parental	Spousal	Total	Status/ Con- sumption	Parental	Spousal	Total
				%				%
Status/cons.	5	6	13	24	4	7	7	18
Parental	5	8	15	28	7	15	19	41
Spousal	11	14	24	49	7	16	18	41
Total	21	28	52	100	18	38	44	100
N				386				366
Correlation between the two variables	($r = -.04$)				($r = +.10$)			

Almost complete consensus on the kind of goals or satisfactions enjoyed in family life occurs for roughly one-third of all couples. This occurs mainly where spousal goals are emphasised (24 per cent), although consensus on parental satisfactions is almost as significant as on spousal satisfactions. Only in a very small proportion of cases (less than 6 per cent), however, does consensus occur on (family) status or consumption goals and satisfactions. At the other extreme, roughly one in four of all couples differ very fundamentally in the rank order of their goals and satisfactions in family life, the rank order of wives' goals and satisfactions being almost completely opposite to that of their husbands (e.g., when one spouse emphasises spousal goals, the other emphasises status or consumption goals). In terms of the overall priority in values — spousal, parental, or status — these spouses differ very fundamentally.

However, as has been proposed, it is not necessary for each spouse to have exactly the same goals for the family system to operate effectively. Only if the goals being pursued require a reciprocal pursuit by one's spouse would differences in priority be at all significant. As we can see from the results in Table 4, although 24 per cent of both spouses agree on the priority of spousal goals, almost half of all husbands and wives assign such a priority to spousal goals. We have hypothesised, however, that some kinds of dissensus are almost normative as, for example, in the traditional family where wives assign priority to parental goals, while husbands regard instrumental or status goals as most significant. The opposite combination of goals — that is, the 11 per cent of husbands who had emphasised spousal goals while their wives had stressed basically instrumental or status goals — are obviously not easily accommodated. In these families traditional sex role expectations are completely reversed. There are certain cases also where consensus may not be functional. For instance, the joint pursuit of status/instrumental goals by a small proportion of couples could logically occur only where both spouses are almost completely alienated from each other.

To conclude, if one accepts the logic of the theoretical position taken, it appears that roughly two-thirds of the couples have either consensually accommodative goals (i.e., spousal or parental — 32 per cent) or goals that are reciprocally accommodatable (i.e., wives with spousal goals/husbands with parental or status ones and wives with parental goals/husbands with status ones). On the other hand, over a third of couples have culturally incompatible goals (i.e., ones with complete role reversals or goals which, although they may not be incompatible, are obviously instances of goal deflection). Here the lowest priority is given by both spouses to values which bear directly on their spousal or parental responsibilities and highest priority to purely instrumental goals.

However, before we examine the likely alienative consequences of such variations in couples' values, we should first examine the levels of "achievement" of such goals — that is, the degree of consistency between goals aspired to and actual satisfactions achieved. As we can see from the results presented in Table 4, we find a slightly different distribution of couples in terms of their mutual satisfactions in marriage and family life than in terms of the combination of ideal goals or values they would have liked to see achieved. It appears that many spouses do not actually achieve what they would like to achieve in family life, while, on the other hand, some spouses appear to have achieved a "higher" level of satisfaction than they had aimed for. Fewer wives and husbands achieved more satisfaction in spousal goals than they would have liked, for instance. On the other hand, significantly fewer husbands said they got most satisfaction from purely status/consumption pursuits than had said they would be most content with these as the most important goals in family life.

IV.2 THE "ACHIEVEMENT" OF GOALS

The consistency in the rank orders of respondents' "goals" and satisfactions is examined in the following table. It reports the extent to which each spouse's order or priority in goals is actually "achieved".

Table 5: *Percentage distribution of spouses by the extent of correlation or consistency between their order of priorities in goals and actual satisfactions enjoyed in family life*

Extent of correlation between each respondent's order of "goals" and order of "satisfactions" in marriage and family life*	Wives' Responses (Goals x Satisfactions)	Husbands' Responses (Goals x Satisfactions)
	%	%
Highly Negative Correlation Rho. = $< -.49$	4.4	6.6
Negative Correlation Rho. = 0 to $-.49$	20.3	19.6
Positive Correlation Rho. = 0 to $+.49$	32.6	35.1
High Positive Correlation Rho. = $> +.49$	40.0	31.6
No information	3.0	8.0
Total	100	100

*The Spearman rank order correlation, Rho, is calculated for each spouse. Taking the rank order of 8 goals as the standard, the deviation from this of each item's rank order on "satisfactions" is calculated.

Not surprisingly, given the previous results, up to one in four spouses significantly fail to achieve their goals. Their highest priorities in what they would like to achieve becomes, in fact, their lowest in terms of what they actually achieved, while their lowest order of priority in terms of goals becomes their highest in terms of satisfaction. On the other hand, over a third of both husbands and wives exhibit a very high consistency in the rank orders of goals and satisfactions.

However, in interpreting the meaning and consequences of these results, the kind of goals being pursued needs to be considered. The higher the correlation between the rank orders of goals and satisfactions for husbands, for instance, the less likely were these goals to be spousal ones. (See Table 6 below.) Such "high achieving" husbands also were far less likely to participate in emotionally supportive functions in the family, and their wives were also least satisfied with their husbands' roles. Table 6 relates the level of "achievement" of respondents' goals — the level of consistency between the rank order of their goals and satisfactions — to the kind of goals each respondent assigned greatest priority, as well as to the level of satisfaction of wives with their husbands' role performance. For wives the position is completely reversed. The greater the correlation between a wife's goals and achievements, the more likely was she to emphasise spousal goals and the greater her evaluation of her husband's roles.

These quite contrasting patterns clearly indicate the existence of sex-differentiated adaptations to developing marital roles. A tendency toward spousal role preferences for wives and traditional role preferences for husbands requires more of an adjustment on the husband's part. If he actually achieves his traditional goals, it is very likely to lead to the estrangement of his wife. Only if he adjusts his more traditional expectations to meet those of his wife will a satisfactory relationship develop. (See also Hannan and Katsiaouni, 1977, pp. 94—96, 153).

Perhaps this point becomes clearer in the following proposition. If husbands pursue status goals, there is a clearly negative correlation between the level of achievement of these goals and the level of wives' evaluation of husbands' role performance ($r = -.13$). If they pursue parental goals, there is also an equally clear negative correlation between these two variables ($r = -.16$). On the other hand, if husbands give priority to spousal goals, there is a low, but singificantly positive, correlation ($r=+.09$) between these 2 variables. Only if husbands successfully pursue spousal goals does it result in marital and familial integration. Husbands need to be deflected from the pursuit of exclusively status or parental goals if the spousal and familial satisfaction of wives is to be maximised.

We examine these relationships in more detail in the following table. Here it is obvious that the order of ranking of goals (or satisfactions) by husbands

Table 6: *Percentage distribution of spouses by their level of goal achievement and by kind of goals aspired to by wives.*

Kinds of goals given greatest priority by wives	Wives' goal achievement [extent of correlation between goals and satisfactions]			Husbands' goal achievements [extent of correlation between goals and satisfactions]		
	High (3) $(Rho > +.49)$	Medium (2) $(Rho < +.49)$	Low (1) (Rho is negative)	High (3) $(Rho > +.49)$	Medium (2) $(Rho < +.49)$	Low (1) (Rho is negative)
Wives	%	%	%	%	%	%
(3) Spousal goals	66	48	42	45	50	54
(2) Parental goals	25	39	33	30	32	37
(1) Status goals	9	13	25	25	18	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Extent of correlation (Pearsonian) between kind of goals pursued (scored as above) and level of achievement of these goals	$r = +.22$ (p $< .05$)			$r = -.11$ (p $< .05$)		
Percentage of wives with high evaluation of husbands' roles	67	61	54	59	62	71
	$r = +.11$ (p $< .05$)			$r = -.08$ (p $< .10$)		

is not significantly correlated with achievement of his goals or with any increase of the overall integration of spousal or parent-child relationships. On the other hand, there is a small, but very consistent, correlation between the pursuit of spousal goals by wives and (a) the achievement of these goals, (b) the successful deflection of husbands' toward wives' goals, and (c) the overall level of spousal and joint emotional integration of families. The more successfully a wife pursues spousal goals, the more integrated the couple and the family become. Compared to the relative salience of his wife's goals, those held by the husband tend to be much less significant or, from the perspective of wives, actually mischievous.

Table 7: *Relationships between the kind of goals given priority by spouses, the actual level of "achievement" of these goals, and the extent of overall spousal integration*

	Kind of goals given priority by husbands and wives (3 = Spousal; 2 = Parental; 1 = Status)	
	Husband's goal priorities	*Wife's goal priorities*
(1) Extent of "achievement" of wife's goals in marriage	r = −.04*	r = +.15 (p < .05)
(2) Extent of "achievement" of husband's goals in marriage	r = +.06*	r = −.11 (p < .05)
(3) Extent of spousal integration	r = +.04*	r = +.24 (p < .01)

*Not significant at the 10 per cent level.

Given these discrepant sex-lined tendencies, it must be expected that consensus in values has quite different meanings for both spouses. If wives' goals are more salient than those of husbands and husbands make considerably more adjustments in their goals/values than do their wives, then the use in analysis of a naïve consensus perspective can be utterly misleading. This point becomes quite clear in the following table. This studies the correlation between level of consensus on goals and the level of "achievement" of wives' and husbands' goals in marriage.

From this it appears that while the achievement of husbands' individualistic goals in marriage is mediated by the degree of mutual consensus with their wives, the reverse is not the case. The achievement of wives' goals appears to be dependent on converting husbands toward their own priorities in marriage and their relative degree of success in that endeavour to a large extent influence the quality of the marriage (see Tables 6 and 7). Nor is there any significant correlation between either measure of "consensus" and any measure of spousal satisfaction or overall spousal or familial integration.

Table 8: *Correlations (Pearsonian) between consensus on goals and achievement of goals for both spouses*

	Extent of consensus between husband and wife on goal priorities (Rho = −1.0 to +1.0)	Extent of consensus between spouses on priorities in satisfactions (Rho = −1.0 to +1.0)
(1) Extent of achievement* of wife's goals in marriage (Rho = −1.0 to +1.0)	r = +.04	r = +.14
(2) Extent of achievement* of husband's goals in marriage (Rho = −1.0 to +1.0)	r = +.17	r = +.37

*The extent of achievement of goals is measured by the correlation (Rho) between rank order of "goals" and "satisfaction" which was calculated for each spouse. Extent of consensus on goals/satisfactions is measured in the same way. Taking the rank order of wives as the standard, the deviation of each of the 8 items, as ranked by husbands, was calculated. Deviations were summed and Rho calculated.

It appears, therefore, that irrespective of whether there is consensus or dissensus on goals, the pursuit of spousal goals by wives increases the probability of goals being achieved and also increases the probability of marital and familial integration. This is not at all true for husbands. Indeed, there is no consistent relationship between the kind of goals he pursues, the level of "achievement" of these goals, and the overall level of spousal and familial integration. If there is any trend, it is in a negative direction. It is almost as if husbands' goals were irrelevant to final outcomes. Because wives tend to have modernised their expectations while their husbands retain more traditional ones, the development of spousal or marital integration can occur only where husbands adjust their expectations to those of their wives.

Three conclusions, therefore, appear clearcut. First, consensus or dissensus on values, *per se,* has no significant consequences for marital or familial relationships. The level of spousal integration depends on the values about which there is serious disagreement. Secondly, to achieve an integrated relationship, husbands appear to be more likely to adjust their expectations to those of their wives than vice versa. Husbands with traditional expectations are only likely to achieve their "old-fashioned" goals in the unlikely circumstances of consensus on their traditional goals. In this case, the marital relationship is not a very integrated one. Thirdly, wives are far more likely to achieve their goals in a dissensus situation because (a) certain apparently discrepant goals — where husbands pursue status, and wives spousal, goals — are accommodatable, and (b) husbands, being more likely to have "traditional" expectations, are also more likely to accommodate to their wives' "modern" expectations than the reverse. When this accommodation occurs,

it is likely to lead to a more emotionally integrated set of relationships
within the family.

Quite clearly all the results so far reported lend support to our hypotheses.
Directly, however, they relate only to hypothesis (iii) — that dealing with sex
differences in adaptation to cultural and social change. Evidently wives are
outrunning their husbands in terms of value change and in terms of the
active translation of these ideological changes into practice within the family.
Quite obviously also, as has been extensively reported upon in an earlier
publication (Hannan and Katsiaouni, 1977), wives are not always successful
in their attempts at converting husbands. Many of them remain captured
and unhappy within traditional familial arrangements about which they
appear unable to do anything.

The following two tables of results provides confirmation for the other
three main hypotheses proposed for testing. Here the relationship between
the kind of values actually enjoyed by spouses and the level of overall
spousal integration is examined.

Table 9: *Relationships between combinations of values held and satisfactions enjoyed
by husbands and wives, and overall level of spousal integration*

Level of spousal integration	Discrepant satisfactions Wife and husband = status, wife = status, husband = parental or spousal.	Traditional or transitional Husband = status, wife = parental or spousal. Both parental.	"Modern" Both spousal, Wife spousal and husband parental. Husband spousal and wife parental.
	%	%	%
Very High 3	7	18	14
High 2	28	44	49
Moderate 1	43	30	33
Very Low 0	22	8	4
Total %	100	100	100
N	40	107	200

Chi-square = 22.9, p $<$ .01.

The results have had to be presented at a high level of aggregation because
of the problem of small numbers. Nevertheless, some very clear trends
emerge.

(i) The lowest level of spousal integration occurs where both spouses
assign highest priority to status values or where wives emphasise status
values and husbands parental or spousal values. This clearly supports our
hypotheses. The same results emerge if one uses spouses' goals rather than

their satisfactions as a discriminator. Quite obviously, in families where such role reversals occur or where both spouses deflect their aspirations toward status values, the quality of spousal relationships is poor.

(ii) On the other hand, there is very little difference in the level of spousal integration of couples with traditional, "transitional" or "modern" values/satisfactions. However, if one uses respondents' goals as the main discriminating variable, the couples with the most modern goals have quite clearly the highest level of spousal integration. Only rather equivocal support is given, therefore, to the hypothesis of highest levels of spousal integration occurring in families where both spouses pursue modern values.

Respondents are categorised in Table 9 only on the basis of the single value given highest priority, not on the total overall ranking of the 8 items presented to them. If we dichotomise respondents on their overall level of consensus (as described in Table 8) and relate the mix of goals/values held by couples to their overall level of spousal integration, we get some clearer trends (Table 10). By far the lowest level of integration occurs where there is joint agreement in the priority of status goals. The next lowest occurs where the traditional roles of husband and wife appear to be reversed with husbands having more "modernised" goals/values than wives.

Table 10: *Controlling for levels of consensus on goals/values in family life — the percentage distribution of couples by the kind of goals they jointly pursue and by the quality of the marital relationship*

Levels of spousal integration	Relative consensus on goals			Relative dissensus on goals	
	Priority on spousal goals	Priority on parental goals	Priority on status goals	Husbands give priority to spousal, wives to parental/status or husbands to parental and wives to status, goals	Wives give priority to spousal/parental, and husbands to status, goals
	%	%	%	%	%
High 2/3	54	63	13	39	50
Moderate 1	44	27	62	39	39
Very Low (0)	2	10	25	22	11
Total %	100	100	100	100	100
N	91	32	18	107	128

The highest level of spousal integration occurs where there is consensus or agreement on the priority of spousal or parental-spousal goals, or where wives emphasise the latter while husbands emphasise their traditional instrumental goals. Here, with one exception, the hypotheses are clearly supported.

Where wives give highest priority to spousal values and husbands assign highest priority to status-consumption values, levels of social-emotional integration are almost as high as where there is complete consensus on the priority of spousal goals. Complete mutuality is not apparently necessary in these circumstances.

V CONCLUSIONS

With one exception the main hypotheses proposed are clearly supported by our results. A very fundamental shift does appear to have occurred in the values underlying spousal and familial relationships. The significance of values which stress spousal companionship and emotional supportiveness has become dominant. Least conflict or, at least, the highest levels of reciprocal husband-wife support occurs where highest priority is given to the development of spousal or parent-child relationships. Most conflict and the lowest level of mutually supportive relationships occurs amongst spouses when both emphasise status goals or where husbands' values are more modernised than those of wives. No support, however, is given to the hypothesis that the pursuit of spousal companionship goals by wives requires a reciprocal dedication by husbands for a well integrated relationship, although the insistence on traditional patterns of dominance by husbands in this situation causes most conflict. The hypothesis that wives provide the driving force behind family role modernisation is strongly supported.

What seems to be most characteristic of those couples who have adapted most successfully to more "modern" modes of interpersonal interaction is, therefore, (a) the greater relevance or significance of wives' values, (b) the gradual adjustment process by which husbands' values or utilities are fitted to those of wives, and (c) the problematic nature of this development and of the associated process of development of what Turner (1970) calls "crescive bonds" of mutual identification, social-emotional support and interdependence, etc. This process of "role bargaining" or interpersonal adjustment needs further attention in family analysis.

The management of conflict in this situation, or the adaptation of couples to persistent unresolved conflicts, would require a much more active, but also more self-defensive, procedure than is ensured by traditional "withdrawal" arrangements. That could only be an effective arrangement or be personally sustainable for spouses given the following three conditions: (1) they are effectively insulated from each other by a rigid segregation of roles; (2) they are able to call upon an independent network of supportive relatives, friends and neighbours; and (3) the spousal relationship has not the central significance it has attained in modern marriages. In modern conditions none of these conditions hold. In this context the use of traditional role theory

(consensus) models by family sociologists is not alone inappropriate, but misleading. A more fruitful model would be one that stresses the probability of dissensus and the significance of role bargaining, and that emphasises the process by which an effective interpersonal conflict management procedure develops, as well as the whole process of social-emotional bonding. Unfortunately, such a unified model does not exist in family sociology. Broderick's (1971) review of the use of theoretical models in family research literature does not include any reference to conflict or tension-management models (Moore, 1963; Coser, 1956). Only those sociologists and social psychologists working on family psychiatric problems (Jackson, 1968; Mishler and Waxler, 1968) deal in any sophisticated way with these processes, but these studies refer almost exclusively to particular communicational problems and to small-group observation contexts. Obviously, a major theoretical and methodological lacuna exists. While we await theoretical and methodological developments, Irish family sociologists should use existing theoretical and methodological approaches with some care.

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