

Anthropologist says Longterm marriages fading quickly

By SHIRLEE IDEN

To play or not to play?
That was the question six years ago when Nena O'Neill and her husband George wrote "Open Marriage."

The two anthropologists supported the idea of a more open kind of relationship where even extramarital sex could be accepted.

Not surprisingly, the book evoked widespread controversy.

Mrs. O'Neill, a Southfield interview, said recently that her subsequent research has given her new insights. After interviewing hundreds of men and women—married, divorced, living together and single, she's come to new conclusions about sexual freedom.

"The more accustomed we become to the new freedoms, the more open we become in our attitudes toward sex, the more men and women are affirming their need for sexual exclusivity," she said.

Her findings are reported in a new book, "The Marriage Premise," published this month as a Bantam paperback.

"Marriage, like most institutions, is changing and I think marriages are getting better," she said.

"We're learning more about them than expectations are getting more realistic. I don't think we're going to see as many very long term marriages, the 50 and 60 year kind in the future. What we will see is more people who enter two marriages in a lifetime."

A native of Akron, Ohio, Mrs. O'Neill said she left the Midwest to go to college in New York and just stayed.

SHE WAS graduated from Barnard College, did graduate work in psychol-

ogy at the New School for Social Research, and is working on her doctorate in anthropology from the City University of New York.

She met her husband, George, in college and the two have studied and practiced marriage together for about 30 years.

With him, she has co-authored "Shifting Gears: Finding Security in a Changing World" as well as "Open Marriage." Both have been reissued several times and have become "standards" to her satisfaction.

One of her findings on contemporary marriage is that child-rearing has become separated in the world of today.

"Once having a family was an expected part of marriage, but this is not true today," she said. "Today couples form a unit and think of themselves as a family without children."

"And then, we are more accepting of bachelors, single women and others who don't strictly conform. Actually, people do not need a long time marriage to be a fulfilled person—and that's fine."

"Some people don't make good marriage partners."

Mrs. O'Neill said the overriding feeling about marriage today is different than it was six years ago when she and her husband interviewed for "Open Marriage."

"In 1972 people were confused," she said. "They hadn't accepted the new role changes. Today we even accept the stay-at-home homemaker."

"NOT ALL women who do work are out there because they want to be. And fathers are sharing more and more in child-rearing."

She contends that cooperation benefits fathers because it "expands their

emotional life and their appreciation of humanness."

Admitting our society still has some of the same old problems and a swollen divorce rate, she said she is, nevertheless, optimistic about marriage.

"People seem to be stepping back and taking a look before they plunge into divorce," she said. "For a time, women opted for divorce as soon as they found their males not accepting their new role."

"Husbands are trying to adjust to the new roles also, but this is slower."

One of the most positive clues she has perceived is that divorce rates all over the country have leveled off.

"After a number of years when they kept going up as a constant, the curve has flattened out," she said. "Divorces haven't gone down, statistically, but the rate has leveled."

She said this may be because a large number of older marriages were dissolved when divorce became more acceptable—and because people don't marry because of social pressure to the extent they once did.

Nena and George O'Neill have always worked together as a team, she explained. They work at home and also in separate offices.

"THE TAPE recorder is standard equipment," she said. "We interview together and I generally write the rough draft. He helps with the snags and he edits. But there are always lots of rewinds."

She said getting a manuscript simplified and easy for laymen to read and understand is the most difficult part of the process.

"It takes at least eight months from outline to interviews, to transcription and finally to the writing of it," she said.

"Neither of us can write extremely rapidly and sometimes I will write for 24 hours straight. Twelve hour stints are common. I wish I could just write from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and lead a normal life, but that's not how it is."

The O'Neills enjoy dinner out, many friends, tennis and movies. Just now they are putting many hours into a new home they bought on Long Island.

Mrs. O'Neill said the next book will be written in collaboration with her husband on another aspect of human relations.

"There's no problems choosing topics," she said. "The decisions are only—which ones. You have to listen to people's concerns and keep your finger on the pulse."

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FLOYD A. CAIRNS, City Clerk

Published: November 20, 1978

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Column A		Column B		Column C		Column D		Column E	
Proposed (Indicated Revenue Sharing Expenditures)		Amounts ACTUALLY expended from Revenue Sharing (also include in part II)		Amounts actually expended from Antirecession Funds (also include in part II)		Total (Part I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX)		Total (Part I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX)	
Current (1)	Capital (2)	Current (3)	Capital (4)	Current (5)	Capital (6)	Current (7)	Capital (8)	Current (9)	Capital (10)
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6. Police	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165
15. All other - Security	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165	165
Gov. Government Administration	210,000			214,623					
Part VI - CERTIFICATION - This is to certify that the data contained in this report are accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.									
Signature of official		Telephone		Area code		Number		Extension	
Girard C. Miller		474-6115		474-6115		40		40	
Title		Date		11/13/78					
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