

The Care of Infants and Young Children

The New American Dilemma

Floyd M. Martinson

The Care of Infants and Young Children: The New American Dilemma
by Martinson, Floyd M. (Floyd Mansfield), 1916-2000

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This edition by Books Reborn, June 2001. <http://www.books-reborn.org/>

174 p. ; 21 cm.

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Preface

It was in the 1980s that Norway established two unique social institutions: a national office of Commissioner of Children (an ombudsman whose duty it was to attend to the needs and concerns of children), and a National Center for Child Research responsible for stimulating research on children's lives and disseminating information to child serving organizations and to the general public.

It was my good fortune, in 1984-85, to spend a year in Norway as a researcher at the Center for Child Research. It was a banner year for me as it opened my eyes to the promise and importance of doing research on children's lives.

Norway, like many western countries, had for years treated children as *terra incognita*, as an unknown territory for scholars, though Norway had, for years, shown a unique interest in children. Most of the studies that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s were published in Norwegian, hence they were not available to foreign scholars. Based on my year in Norway, I told the story in a book, in English, entitled *Growing Up in Norway, 800 to 1990* (1992).

America, unlike Norway, had focused major attention on two "people's problems"—namely on the problem of the adult labor force; secondly, on the problems of care and support of the aged. There had been only limited research on children's lives.

Based on my background in Norway, I concentrated my attention on the sociology of childhood. I had previously studied one aspect of children's lives and had written about it in two books: *Children and Sex: New Findings, New Perspectives* (1981) and *The Sexual Life of Children* (1994). I now broaden my attention to include coverage of *The Care of Infants and Young Children*.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Any person, agency, or organization that takes responsibility for the care of a baby or young child for part of a day or for a full day can be characterized as a *child caregiver*. Included are a relative; a next-door neighbor; a Head Start, preschool, kindergarten or elementary school teacher; an au pair or nanny; family day care; a day care center; a 24-hour care center—or any person or organization that relieves the parents of child-care responsibility. Parents need help with child care almost from the time a baby is born if both parents are to work outside of the home or want to be free to come and go as they please. This brings the emergence of a new, amorphous, profession called *day care*, a person or persons whose job it is to provide care for children in a convenient place where the parent can drop their child off early in the morning and receive the child again later in the day when one or both parents are at home. Hence, professional day care is a social invention to accommodate to the needs of parents. In other words, it is a “parent-friendly” institution; whether or not it is “child-friendly” is a moot question which will be discussed later. The transition from parental home care to hired child care has not been an easy undertaking to accomplish in the United States. Why is it so difficult to arrange quality care for children in a wealthy nation such as the United States, and why are we not certain that care is best for children, and “child-friendly”? We will trace the hired caregiver role as it has changed over time, asking at all times, whether or not the changes for an infant or young child have been good changes. There has been more or less ambivalence about placing young children outside the home since the beginning of the day care reform.

In 1988, the majority (57 percent) of children were in out-of-home care and the percentage continued to rise. More than half of all parents turn their children over to someone else to care for

before their child is six months old, before the child is old enough to manipulate his/her parents through tears (Kane & Bathke 1997). The proportion of children from birth to age five who have had no parent at home on a full-time basis has nearly quadrupled within the past 50 years (Hernandez 1993). Parents in the state of Washington, a state which has been a leader in welfare reform, must start looking for child care when their baby is 12 weeks old if they are to find an opening by the time they are ready to place the baby (Collins 1997). Current welfare law allows states to exempt new mothers from work requirements for a year, and there is evidence that children benefit if their mother stays home until the child is one-year-old, but, so far, states have not seemed to be taking advantage of this provision. The current welfare bill, insofar as it is successful, will transform with whom, where, and under what conditions many children, particularly babies and young children, will spend their time (Hernandez 1996).

Historically fathers have “always” worked outside the home and were not primary child carers. When *both* father and mother are employed, 80 percent of the child’s waking hours are spent with substitute caregivers. The person or persons who the child sees most of his/her waking hours is a substitute caregiver, often a stranger.

There is conflict between various groups with different perspectives on out-of-home child care. For example, in one town in Arkansas can be found three perspectives representing three groups--Group 1, the parents who used the day care; Group 2, the conservative church that operated the day care; and Group 3, the State. The church recently closed Stone Day Care, which it was operating, claiming that working mothers neglected their children, damaged their marriages and set a bad example. The church board informed parents that continuing to run the day care encouraged mothers to work outside the home, and “families could get by on one salary if they did without such luxuries as big TVs, a microwave, new clothes, eating out, and nice vacations” (*Chicago Tribune*, April 5, 1997, Section 1:3). The church board added that “God intended for the home to be the center of a mother’s world.”

Parents who had used the day care were infuriated, according to press releases, since it left them without a place to leave their children when they were at work. State officials hurriedly set in, licensed another church day care to replace Stone Day Care, and the problem was resolved, at least temporarily.

There is room for conflicting perspectives because there are major differences in attitudes toward out-of-home child care and different care institutions. The family is an arena for private care and private social life. The day care institution is an arena of public care of children. Dencik shows the major differences in the family and a day care institution in the following example.

Table 1: Family and Day Care as Different Sociotypes

	Family	Day Care
Child's Position	Unique Irreplaceable	Equal with Others Replaceable
Social Relationships	Private Child as Emotional Subject	Public Child as Work Object
Time Perspective	Long-lasting	Temporarily Restricted
Child-Child Relations	Few, Stable Different Ages	Many, Varying Same Age

(Dencik 1995:113)

Chapter 2

A Market Economy: Its Effect On Fathers, Mothers and Children

It is difficult to understand the transformation in family life that brought about changes in the lives of husbands, wives, and children without understanding how the development of the market economy turned the attention of all family members away from the family and out in society for much of each day.

America was for many years an agricultural economy. An agricultural economy—based on the care and utilization of domesticated animals (cattle, sheep, horses, goats, chickens); the harvesting of wild and domestic grasses and cereal crops; and the gathering of fruits, nuts and vegetables—*turned family members inward*, caught up in the everyday tasks of the family farm. All family members engaged in the enterprise of making a living, even children as young as five or six years of age. People worked at home, tending fields, minding animals, and taking care of the household. The parents and an estimated 648,000 children worked in agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry.

And there were glowing reports of what outdoor work could do for children. President Butterfield spoke of farm boys and girls as participating in “real tasks. They do not merely play at doing things, they do them. They achieve real results.” People believed that in many respects and in many instances the best place to bring up children was on an American farm.

But the good in farm life and work was not universally present. Farm work did not always possess the values and virtues one could wish for (Fuller 1923). One positive thing that could be said for family-farm work was that it was done under the watchful eye and supervision of the child’s parents, which could not be said of children who later worked in industry. Jobs away from home for

adults and out-of-home placement for children as we know them today did not generally exist previously.

The Industrial Revolution brought truly revolutionary changes. Fathers became breadwinners and worked away from home at jobs that provided wages, and wages were used to support the family. No longer did children see their fathers at work, nor work with fathers even when the children were older. The Industrial Revolution drew the men out of the home and into factories in industrial locations that became the towns and cities of the future.

This was accompanied by an equally revolutionary urban change. In 1800, almost everyone in the United States was involved in agriculture; by 1900, only about half of the work force was so employed. Today, 3 percent of the work force works the land. While agricultural jobs were disappearing, manufacturing jobs grew. This trend continued until around 1960 when manufacturing jobs peaked at around 16 million jobs and involved about 35 percent of the work force. Hence it was revolutionary change in the economy, in the life course particularly of husbands and wives, that in turn transformed childhood and experiences that children had available to them.

There were changes other than farm to factory that markedly affected the environment of children. Parents were now more conscious of the economy and what it did to the family. Parents were looking for ways to manage the family's income. In the early days of the Industrial Revolution, the cost of bearing children increased while at the same time reducing the benefits of having children. There were two ways that the family could change. One was to save money by having fewer children—a shift from large families to small families. This caused a marked change in the family structure. Reduced family size meant fewer siblings for children to play with. But not all changes were negative. Fewer mouths to feed meant that the fewer children born could experience opportunities for education and better jobs as they grew up. In other words, the “quality” of the children raised by the family was enhanced, while the “quantity” of children raised

declined. This was a major effect of the industrial economy on the birth rate (Becker 1981).

It was not due to “hardness of heart” that mothers abandoned the full-time child care role in favor of work outside the home. The reasons are much more convoluted than that, and often quite beyond her control. First, mothers represented an increasingly available and well-educated pool of potential employees between 1880 and 1940 and there was an increased demand for female workers at a time when a growing percentage of both wives and mothers were both qualified and attracted to employment. By 1940 young women were as highly educated as young men, accounting for 53 percent of all high school graduates and 41 percent of bachelors or first professional degree graduates. The trend has not let up. Speaking at the American Economic Conference in New Orleans in 1997, Robin Wils, a female economist at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business gave this advice to women: “Get an education and a career with a promise of advancement and do it early. It can be insurance—regardless of whether prince charming ever appears” (Meyers 1997). College women are following that pattern. Not as many colleges and universities prepare young people, men or women, to be good parents through parenting education but are preparing them for careers through advanced degrees.

Second, paid employment outside the home became increasingly attractive for mothers as a bridge against economic disaster, and paid work became a necessity for the increasing proportion of women who had experienced divorce. The standard of living for men rises about 73 percent if they leave their families; the family they leave behind suffers a 42 percent drop in income (Zuckerman 1998). By 1989, one-fifth of children lived in mother-only families, of these 63 percent lived with divorced or separated mothers, 31 percent lived with never-married mothers, and only 6 percent lived with widowed mothers (Hernandez 1993). This was coupled with an increase in *childhood poverty* between 1969 and 1988. Unless they could attain social support for themselves and their children, such women had to work. The rise in mothers who

work outside the home for pay has some important implications for the day-to-day care of children. For poor mothers receiving public assistance, welfare reform meant that staying at home and taking care of children is no longer regarded as acceptable behavior, which further devalues children. What transpires in the family appears to be more important in explaining children's early social emotional development (NICHD 1998). Children without an emotional attachment to a mother or some other adult seem prone to language disorders, for instance (Grady 1998). Unmarried mothers are no longer counted among the "deserving poor" that is, as deserving public assistance. This supposedly supports the American value of economic self-sufficiency and strong families as central goals of current welfare reform legislation. The consensus is that welfare should provide "temporary relief" in time of need; it should not be a way of life. The program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children is known as Temporary Aid to Needy Families. The benefits of parental work in such cases are potentially enormous in reducing child poverty. There is no question but that the best way to avoid poverty is for children to have two working parents. But between 1960 and 1978, the proportion of all children living with two natural parents, both married only once, declined from 73.3% to 63.1%; by 1990, it was projected to drop to 50% (Haynes 1991).

Parents benefited from their own labor in the market place, they did not benefit from the idleness of their children. Families are apt to be small in a society where parents cannot be sure that they will get profit back from their children's education. After all, when children do grow up and find a productive workplace in society, it is in some other institution, not in the family. Most families do not have a business wherein their children can be employed. *The family has long since ceased to be the central unit of production.*

A way to improve the family income was to put children to work outside the home. There was nothing new about children working; they had always worked, and the labor of children had been exploited for years. As early as 1618, children of English

paupers by the hundreds were dispatched to America where workmen were badly needed. Sending vagrants to America remained a feature of British social policy over almost 350 years (Coldrey 1999). Children were economically employed; in fact, they often worked without pay (Trattner 1970).

With the coming of industrialization children who worked in factories contributed to the family income. A “mentality of work” dominated life at the time. Children worked wherever goods were produced—in textile mills, shoe factories, in lumber mills, tobacco industries, and the glass works. The introduction of power machinery in the late 18th century was ready-made for the hiring of children as laborers. With the spread of factories and the growth of mill towns in America, children were well suited to substitute for adult labor, adult labor skilled in the hand production that preceded the coming of the factory assembly line. Samuel Slater, known as the father of American industry, manned a factory entirely with children, children from 7 to 12 years of age.

The public was ready to accept the picture described by industrialists. Factory owners were doing the family, the child, and the public, a favor, they said, by taking poor youngsters off the streets and keeping them out of trouble.

Children had mixed reactions to their work experience. Many thought it totally in order that they begin work during childhood. Sometimes they found their work to be enjoyable; it made them feel that they were grown-up. Earning money was not the least of the positive experiences, even when the money went to the family for its support. There were children who pressed their parents to allow them to work, especially if they had friends who were already working. Children often preferred work to the emerging schools because they found schools to be unpleasant or uninteresting to attend. Though every state had compulsory attendance laws by this time, they were not regularly enforced and more than half of the children who were employed left because they did not like school (National Industrial Conference Board 1995).

At the turn of the century conditions were right for the National Child Labor Committee and other labor reformers to take

on the main causes of child labor. A child labor movement was not an isolated movement but an integral part of the so-called Progressive Movement, a broad, general campaign to establish standards of public health and well-being. There were no standards for the protection of children, ignorance abounded concerning the nature and needs of children, and children were exploited by the greed of their employers. The National Child Labor Committee hoped to abolish child labor within ten years. The task was more difficult than expected. There had been earlier laws in a number of states, so-called “wrongs to children” laws. However, since no proof of age was required for employment and no money was allocated for enforcement, most of these laws proved ineffective.

Public sentiment was gradually shifting against child labor. There had been stories of the inhumane conditions in English coal mines. The groundwork was laid by the Report of the Select Committee of 1916 on the State of the Children Employed in Manufacture in England. The facts revealed in the report were so shocking as to be hardly believable if it were not for the authority of the Report. Children in coal mines were worked for 14 to 16 hours daily. The coal often lay in seams only 18 inches thick, and the children crawled on their hands and feet dragging or pushing cars of coal through narrow passages. There were reports of children being beaten and sometimes killed. In time the children became stunted in size, pallid and emaciated—a population feeble, short-lived and ignorant (Johnson 1995).

No condition in America, it seemed, could match such horror. Yet there were great shrimp canneries along the Gulf coast, where hundreds of children, many very young, were employed. The work they did was primarily to pick the shrimp out of the shells. The work was arduous, but also hard on the children’s fingers. The shrimp contained a chemical substance which attacked the hands, causing the skin to peel off. In order to keep on working, the children had to harden their hands by dipping them into a solution of alum, used as an astringent and styptic to stop the bleeding.

To popularize the issue of child labor, the National Child Labor Committee hired Lewis W. Hine to photograph conditions and further inform the public of the conditions in the cotton mills, canneries, coal mines, glass making factories, and others. He was not welcome by factory owners. When he got inside a factory he secretly measured height according to the buttons on his coat and scribbled notes while keeping his hands in his pockets. When he could not get into the factories and mines, he stayed outside until closing time and took pictures of the children as they left work. He also contacted their mothers who informed him about the ages of the children. Seeing the pictures further aroused feelings for children.

Dr. A. J. McKelway, secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, wrote the following in 1913. It demanded the restoration of rights by a group, children, who had no rights. Only adults advocating on behalf of children could accomplish the abolition of child labor (Trattner 1970).

*Declaration of Dependence by
the Children of America in Mines
and Factories and Workshops Assembled*

WHEREAS, We, Children of America, are declared to have been born free and equal, and

WHEREAS, We are yet in bondage in this land of the free; are forced to toll the long day or the long night, with no control over the conditions of labor, as to health or safety or hours or wages, and with no right to the rewards of our service, therefore be it

RESOLVED, I—That childhood is endowed with certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are freedom from toll for daily bread; the right to play and to dream; the right to normal sleep of the night session; the right to an education, that we may have equality of opportunity for developing all that there is in us of mind and heart.

RESOLVED, II—That we declare ourselves to be helpless and dependent; that we are and of right ought to be dependent, and that we hereby present the appeal of our helplessness that we may be protected in the enjoyment of the rights of childhood.

RESOLVED, III—That we demand the restoration of our rights by the abolition of child labor in America.

ALEXANDER J. McKELWAY, 1913

But it was not only the employment of young children under deplorable conditions that aroused reformers in America, primarily it was the children's *lack of education*. America still has the highest rate of working children among affluent countries, according to the National Consumer League. About one million children hold jobs in the United States. But *child labor was never again entertained as a universal method of economic support for the family*.

For 20 years the battle over child labor continued, finally to be "supported" by events of the Great Depression. Faced with the ruin of industry and with the realization that labor of immature children was sapping the foundations of the nation's welfare, politicians and legislatures sensed the need to act, and reacted favorably to a child labor amendment (Trattner 1970). Finally, in 1939, the Wages Hours Act abolished child labor all together in Interstate Commerce (Greenleaf 1979). However, this did not eliminate all child labor.

Children enjoy working, if it is not too demanding or dangerous. Several studies have shown that children who work have a greater sense of self-worth than youngsters who play or attend school. Hundeide (1988) compared Asian slum children with children in Western urban society and found that Asian children's wish was to earn money so that they and their family could get out of poverty. They were also concerned about the welfare of their mothers. Children in Western urban society, on the other hand, were spending their days playing: playing with dolls, drawing, bicycling, and playing outside with friends.

The anthropological literature is full of evidence that young children can be competent with respect to society that is not highly technical and that their competence can serve them as a source of pleasure and pride. With positions in industry having been largely eliminated for children, the obligation of young children in society such as ours is to play and “have fun.” Rural Amish children, not living in poverty, when asked to name things they now own which they like most, named adult objects such as dishes, breeding animals, farmland. Children not involved in meaningful work list favorite toys and games they like to play. Socialization through productive work was the traditional way of socializing children in earlier times in America. Teachers and youth leaders rather than farmers and laborers serve as models for children today.

Childhood was reshaped, if not diminished, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath as was the life of adults. Both adults and children were changed—the changed conditions were due to market forces outside their conscious, rational control.

Many parents who do not want their children to work still feel it is their duty to teach their children the responsibility and value of work. Children’s participation in household work is justified as moral training not as an economic contribution (Zelizer 1981). American middle-class city people have “no peer in all the world” in the minimal expectations that they have of their children (Goodman 1970). There appears to be little that city children can do. Yet, child researchers in Norway have focused attention on the work lives of children and find them to be doing many things that might qualify as work. Like many other Western societies, Norway is on the way back to a situation that was common among families and among city people of modest means in the 1800s. That is, both parents work providing for the family; therefore it would seem that children must be brought up to be independent and to participate in the work of the household. Data gathered from 800 persons from 10 to 12 years of age found that they were devoting as much as nine hours a week to household duties. A large majority cleaned their own rooms, washed dishes, and set and clear the table. Half of them made their own lunches and about a third cleaned and

vacuumed rooms other than their own, prepared food, and baked one or more times a week. It is the creative tasks, food preparation and baking, that children prefer to do rather than the cleaning jobs (Berggreen 1987).

Many children fetched the mail, carried out the garbage, and went to the store. They also spent as much as one and a half hours a week on the average playing with, feeding, and carrying for younger siblings. More than a third of them worked outside the house on such projects as shoveling snow or lawn work. Tasks for others in the community added another significant block of time for children's work load. Work for others included housework, running errands, shoveling snow, walking dogs, and washing cars, with the most time being devoted to the care of children, which both boys and girls did. Children also delivered papers and gathered and sold empty containers (Solberg and Vestby 1987). If the family was larger than the average, or if the mother worked full-time, children performed more tasks.

For America, the 20th century has brought changes that made children an economic liability, not an economic asset. Revolutionary changes during the past 150 years, changes in the life course, in the economy and in society transformed both adults and children and the resources available to them. More attention has been given to adults than it has to children and their problems. The Carnegie Council on Children concluded that we have an inadequate, uncoordinated, and incomplete pattern of family support services (Hegnes 1991). An economy has emerged that accommodates itself to strong, well-educated, assertive adults, not small, weak, and knowledge-lacking children. It is an economy that has no use for weakness or incompetence.

Quite a different effect on children occurs when no member of the family is working. Christofferson (1994) interviewed 433 children of long-term unemployed parents. Children reported that the unemployed tended to behave more harshly and unpredictably toward their children. Mothers were more hostile and domineering; less supportive, nurturing and involved with their children. Male breadwinners were pivotal in identifying the

negative impact of economic pressure in family life. There were more conflicts among children with their parents, and between parents themselves during long-term unemployment. Children had feelings of emptiness, loss of self-confidence and feelings of being neglected by others. Support from a parent tended to protect them from self-destructive thoughts, such as suicide, stealing, shoplifting, and the like. There was a tendency for the children of unemployed parents to isolate themselves among the poor. Children of unemployed parents were more likely to avoid social interaction, had stranded relations with peers, more frequently suffered from psychosomatic symptoms, such as headaches, stomach aches, sleeping and eating problems, being bullied in school, having frequent problems of concentrating in school, and stopped going to school earlier than their peers. Children from long-term unemployed families seldom had vocational training, and had a much higher risk of being unemployed by age 25. Unemployed parents had difficulty in pointing out things that their children were good at.

If we allow economic motives to determine our relationships to our children and to the job market, as we are inclined to do, no one can criticize mothers if they take the same opportunities that are open to fathers, especially if there is economic stress in the family. A characteristic feature of childhood in America in the past was the handing-over of the practical and emotional responsibility of children to the mother. Women were traditionally expected to be society's unpaid caregivers. What is believed to be an essential for mental health was that infants and grandchildren should experience a continuous relationship with the mother who would provide a warm and intimate relationship in which both found satisfaction and engagement (Phadraig and Ghiolla 1994). The changes that have taken place are not brought about to better accommodate children. They are changes that reflect the impact of economic, political, and cultural changes largely beyond the control of parents. Sheer economic necessities are an increasingly common reason for mother's employment. The proportion of children who would have lived in poverty if they had depended only

on their father's income were lifted out of poverty, or at least supplemented a below-poverty income, by their mother's income. The percentage lifted out of poverty increased from only three percent to fourteen percent between 1939 and 1988. That is, by 1988, fourteen percent of children depended on their mother's income to lift them out of poverty, and an additional fifteen percent remained in poverty despite their mother's income (Hernandez, 1993). The desire of a mother to help maintain or improve the family's relative social and economic status is one major reason, but not the only one, why mothers enter the labor force.

Factors encouraging well-educated women in families with an adequate income to seek a job are: non-financial rewards of the job itself, the opportunity to be productively involved with other adults, and the satisfaction of having a career in a high-prestige occupation. Neither child work nor homework are sufficiently appealing to a highly-educated woman. Feminists among them saw children as albatrosses, interfering with a woman's self-fulfillment. Child and housework were referred to as "shit work" by some feminist writers to describe the low-status labor involved in care and maintenance of others (Oldman 1994).

The United States has entered a post-industrial period characterized by a phenomenal growth in the service sector. Increasing the number of available jobs in the service sector; the mechanization of many household tasks; and the declining income and employment opportunities for young men, especially those who lack skills, have added momentum to women in the labor force. New jobs created in the 1980s were increasingly in the service sector and were far more likely than manufacturing jobs to be part-time or temporary, to pay low wages, and to lack other benefits. In other words, jobs for which women lacking in skills could apply. Part-time work could be appealing especially for a mother who worked full-time or more and felt that she did not spend the "right amount" of time with her children. Mothers feel that they miss events that their children consider important and would like to have a parent attend.

The role of mothers in child rearing is viewed differently from a traditional as compared to a feminist perspective. From the latter perspective, the child's *need* for mothering is absolute, but the need of an adult woman to do parenting is relative. Family systems that provide numerous adults to care for the young child can make up for the discrepancy in need between mother and child. The role of maternity in the American family system may extract too high a price of depravation for young adult women with highly-diversified interests and social expectations concerning adult life (Rossi 1997). A child does not need exclusive mothering. This knowledge helps free women, to develop the autonomy which too much embeddedness in a mother-infant relationship takes from them. Studies of collective child rearing activities, such as the Israeli Kibbutzim suggests that children develop a sense of solidarity and commitment to a group, less individualism and competitiveness and are less likely to form intense, exclusive mother-child relationships than children reared in the traditional nuclear family of husband, wife, and children (Chodorow 1978). Chodorow is of the opinion that children are better off in situations where loving relationships are not a scarce resource controlled and manipulated by one person only. Personal connection to and identification with both parents enables a parent to choose those activities he or she desires. Mothers assist in this change; mothers with a high level of education and desirable work skills demand day care for their children to a greater extent than do other mothers.

Schaffer (1977) asked provocatively whether children need a mother. His answer is both "yes" and "no." "Yes," if one means that children are involved in a loving and caring relationship to another human being. "No," if it means that the mother, the person who gave birth to the child, must inevitably be that person, that no one else can take her place. "No," again, if caring for a child must indicate an exclusive caring relationship to only one human figure who is totally responsible for the child's emotional and social development. But "yes," again, if it is acceptable that a handful of important human beings with whom the child is warmly connected

can manage a secure, stable and developing caring environment during the years of childhood. This highlights the child's remarkable capacity to develop a repertoire of positive social contacts with a number of persons who care tenderly for him/her. The development of the child's personality is dependent on factors other than the mother's behavior alone, shifting the internal obligation toward the child to both mother and father, and beyond that to other persons, as well as to social and governmental institutions.

There is no *natural* reason why women should carry the sole responsibility for rearing children and why their character should be judged by solely how successful they are at doing so (Auerbach 1988). There are social factors that result in this arrangement. Biological factors meld into social factors. It is impossible to argue that changing diapers, changing clothing, feeding (beyond the age of nursing), talking to and playing with a baby are valuable to women and not to men. These are tasks that an individual *learns* to do.

A woman's sense of continuity with her infant may shade into too much connection and not enough separation. The development of a sense of an autonomous self becomes difficult for children and leads to a mother's loss of sense of self as well. It is stressful for a woman to work outside the home and to have a baby or child to care for at home. Researchers found that the stress-hormone levels in working mothers, working in clerical or customer-service jobs, rose when they woke up and remained high until bedtime. The level of cortisol, a hormone known to relate to "stress," and a lack of personal control, were higher throughout the day for working mothers with children at home than with childless women or those with no children living at home (Boodman 1997). It is especially stressful when the child is very young. As one mother of a baby expressed it to Feldman (1994) in her interviews with mothers, "Nobody ever told me when I had a baby and a job I'd have to go two years without sleep." Another mother said, "We all know that at six weeks postpartum you can go back to work... The reality is you are

postpartum for 21 years. Motherhood is a big job you've taken on." The job becomes more stressful for the mother who attempts to continue nursing the baby after returning to work. Said one mother, "I nursed the whole year. I made a commitment because I felt that it was so important. I would nurse him in the morning, take him to the caregiver, work all morning, go there for lunch, nurse him, come back, work all afternoon, and pick him up or my husband would pick him up. I'd go home, nurse him before he went to bed and then back to work... It was constant juggling; it was awful."

Many women, and men, are not prepared for the experience of having a baby. It is for such inconvenience that many mothers give up nursing and employ the use of a breast pump instead. It is understandable that 13 percent of employed women do not expect to bear children at all, compared to 6 percent of women not in the labor force. Employed women, in 1983, had an average of 0.8 children while women not in the labor force had an average of 1.7 children (Bianche and Sprain 1986). Steeply falling fertility and ever-increasing length of life means that only about one-third of the average married women will spend her adult years as the mother of at-home children. This is a great change from the days when womanhood and motherhood were virtually equivalent (Popenoe 1996). Many women are now free to pursue gainful employment. Large numbers of women have graduated from business and law schools since the 1970s and are in pursuit of professional careers. In a study of 110 female executives, 12 percent had never married, 12 percent were divorced. Of those who had children the average was only one child. The average salary for these women was about \$135,700. Many required that their husbands engaged in the day-to-day care of the children (Popenoe 1996). Having a highly-skilled wife in a prestigious position is less unusual than it once was. Women are the major bread winner in only a small proportion of married couple households, but it is a trend that has been building over the decades. There are no reliable statistics, but some evidence that stay-at-home husbands are growing in number. A survey of 371 stay-at-home husbands

found that 67 percent did it because their spouses were making more money than they were. Sixty-five percent said they did it because they did not want to put their children in day care (Apgar, Meyer, and Friedmann 1997). This is not to imply that role reversal is necessarily taken easily by either men or women. As one woman executive confessed, she needs the “challenges of work” but at the same time is “overwhelmed by the pull of family life.”

One might ask, given the pressures and the rewards both working in a market economy, why families continue to have children at all. If we think in terms of the cost of raising children, which is a common way of looking at children in a market economy, the cost is high. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture a typical middle-class, husband-wife family will spend over \$300,000 to raise one child to age 18. In a market economy, children are an economic burden (Qvortrup 1987). Children are seen as the *cause* of the relatively low standard of living of their parents. Reducing children to a budget item is dehumanizing for children, though it may be a necessity. On the other hand, the demands of children are “treasures” their parents cannot “buy.” Children want to be loved, cuddled, hugged, listened to, and played with. These things take a great amount of time and attention from parents; time and attention that working parents do not have the luxury of giving. Young children are oblivious to time. The economic cost of raising children may be the least costly element of parenting. The demands that children make on their parents’ time and attention are not economic. And society expects much of parents, they are held responsible if a child succumbs and turns out badly; on the other hand, there are few public rewards for a parent who is successful in raising a child to maturity. The ideology in America is that parents are responsible for their children. It is uniquely American to feel that the state should not, in fact cannot, care for children’s basic needs. With family bearing the burden, the presence of two adults in the household is an important buffer against poverty.

Today's American family bears nearly the full cost of raising and educating children, yet reaps no economic benefit in return. American society, on the other hand, receives almost all of the economic advantages of the children born and reared, and shares only marginally in the burdens. For the family, all that is left is in the affective, emotional sphere (which may be considerable when viewed in non-economic terms), whereas for society as a whole, the economic importance of children occurs as the next generation of laborers. Parents pay dearly for the benefit of having children of their own and watching them grow and develop; society spends very little yet realizes enormous economic benefits from the children that have been brought up and educated well.

When the flow of wealth from children to parents shows a negative balance as it does today, the economic significance of procreation changes radically. The child counts, economically, solely over the long-term, when he or she no longer is at home, when having reached adulthood he or she is finally able to demand the benefits from society that were previously denied. They are their individual benefits, not the benefits of the parents.

For society there are no advantages in a declining population, demanding as it does constantly renewed labor force. There are economic disadvantages for the family. The family loses if it must continue to pay the high cost of the greater amount of education required to obtain a good occupation, between 25,000 and 30,000 dollars a year. One might expect a reaction from families in the face of a society that takes from them the economic benefits that derive from raising children without providing more of the cost of child rearing in return (Sgritta 1994).

The value of bearing children had to be reduced before fertility fell significantly. Although birth control techniques are credited with the decline in birth rates, the decline in birth rate began in the United States before the birth control pill was extensively used (Becker 1991). According to Qvortrup (1994), if a total fertility rate of 1.7 continued in the United States for 200 years, the population would be reduced to 1/30th of its original size. This would mean that, before the year 2200, the population would

decline from 240,000,000 to 7,000,000 people. This order of magnitude would be so great that it would likely lead to measures by society to correct the cost imbalance and reverse the trend in child-rearing costs from the family to society.

But parents like children, and a majority have children as one of the major purposes of life. No matter what the barriers, they *want* children. Economically speaking, it may seem surprising that an infertile couple will spend \$50,000 or more to produce a baby of their own (Longman 1998). Parents make it abundantly clear that their children hold center stage in their lives and are one of the greatest sources of satisfaction. Children are not marginal. Parents claim to devote considerable time and attention to them. In a recent study, Hays (1996) asked 38 mothers of 2-4 year old children "How would you feel if you never had children?" None of her prior research prepared her for the intensity of the deep and emotional response she received from the women. Nearly a quarter of them began to cry when she asked the question. This emotional response was even more striking since the question was asked just five minutes into the interview. She had talked to the mothers by phone several times before their meeting, but was still a stranger to them, and had little chance to talk about children and child rearing. Many of them told her that no one could fully understand how deeply they would feel. Over half of the mothers used the words: "lonely," "empty," or "missing something" to explain how they would feel. Other answers included "miserable", "sad," "depressed," "a great sense of loss," "desperate," "unfulfilled." Nearly all of the mothers expressed similar reasons for the sadness they would experience at the thought of not having a baby. One must recognize that the response of these mothers was not alone due to their sadness over not having a child, but may express the depth of attachment already felt for the two to four year old child that they had.

There are many signs of pressure on the family as it goes about the business of planning careers of husband and wife, and rearing children. The result of the lack of balance between what the family contributes to upbringing and what it receives, and

what society contributes and what society receives is evident in the birthrate, for the birthrate is left in the sovereign hands of the individual couple and no one else. Since child-bearing is voluntary, not required, it indicates the emotional value that parents place on having children. In fact, more women become mothers (albeit, of fewer children) than did a century ago (Qvortrup, 1995).

We are approaching the end of this historic, revolutionary shift towards smaller families. At the beginning of the century, most children grew up in families with five or more children, a lively number of playmates. Today the overwhelming majority live in families with one or two children. When this century began, the typical adolescent had at least five or six siblings, while his twenty-first century counterpart will have only one. The historic fertility decline in this country resulted from social, economic, and political changes that increased the cost of having a large family while reducing its benefits. To increase the benefits, couples pursued a variety of strategies—including limiting the size of their families in order to maximize the time and resources that would be available to advance their own work and career as well as the work and careers of their children when they grew up. Hence children are of less economic value, have fewer brothers and sisters, and are a declining proportion of the U.S. population.

Since 1965, fertility rates have dropped precipitously, and in no year since 1971 have families in the United States produced the number of children required to replace the population (Haynes 1991). Married couples are postponing first birth; the median interval between marriage and first birth was 23.5 months for couples married between 1975 and 1979; couples are delaying childbearing, not forgoing childbirth entirely. The average number of births per woman decreased from 3.7 to 1.8 during the period from 1950 to 1970 and has increased only slightly in recent years. Groups of ever-smaller size are appearing in the labor market. These children will enter the labor market at an increasingly older age as relatively more and more children are educated for an ever-greater number of years and at increasing cost (Hernandez 1993).

The rise in childless couples is likely to continue in the 1990s (American Demographics Desk Review 1992). The decision of a dual-career couple to remain childless offers economic advantage. Imagine a middle-class couple deciding that he shall have a vasectomy, or she shall have her tubes tied to prevent the interruption of child raising. Child raising that would create enormous wealth for the society, and great economic sacrifice for the couple. The number of children per couple has been going down over several generations. Young couples are waiting longer to have children. To maintain the standard of living that a couple had before the birth of a child, a 25 percent increase of the household budget is necessary (Wintersberg 1994); between 1973 and 1990 the income of young families declined significantly (Children's Defends Fund 1992).

Could Goetting be right in suggesting that parents "really do like their children," but that, as a nation, "we do *not* really like children" (Goetting 1994:81)?

The experience of oppression that women have endured in fulfilling both mother and career roles and the social dislocation resulting from the struggle for liberation have called for an era dominated by adulthood separated as much as possible from motherhood. And if there are children, the quest for human rights often results in the oppression of children; for the pursuit of liberation has been waged at the cost of the early "containment" of children in out-of-home child care (Suransky 1982). As early as 1980, married women with children under three years of age were placing them in day care and entering the labor market faster than any other group.

Men's "learned helplessness" has been used to explain men's continuing lack of expertise in sharing child care and home work. Marzolla, in her book *Fathers and Babies: How Babies Grow and What They Need From You, from Birth to 18 Months* (1993), aims to offer correctives in the imbalance for ill-informed fathers willing to listen. She provides practical advice on burping, feeding, handling infants; soothing a crying baby; bathing an infant; changing a

diaper; sleep problems and solutions; dressing a child; games to play; early teaching, disciplining, weaning, bedtime rituals, and many others.

But we get ahead of our story. First, we will look at what we call *intact families*, families that give children first-place. Then a chapter on community as a help or hindrance for the family; a chapter on the well-established elementary school as an institution that cares for and educates all children 4 to 5 years old and older; and, lastly, a chapter on day care, that has been adopted as a way for both mothers and fathers to gain more freedom from child care responsibilities.

Chapter 3

The Child and an Intact Family

When Americans say they *believe* in the family, they are speaking about families that regard children as “their most precious resource.” They speak about stable, intact families, as the following statements confirm:

“In fact, no one has disputed that there is a sense in which adults are at their best, they’re most civilized, when tending to the nature of children” (Postman 1972:64).

“For children to grow up healthy and whole, they need the constant love, careful nutrition, and secure environment provided by strong, stable families” (National Council on Children 1991:3).

“For children, the family is irreplaceable as the major source of social and economical well-being” (Popenoe 1994:1679).

“Families are generally held to be children’s place par excellence” (Qvortrup & Christopherson 1991:14).

In this chapter we look at what an intact family means for children. The intact family is defined as a stable, intimate place, a private social life in a private sphere; a cohabitive arrangement of persons differing in age, wherein the older generation, the parents, care about, instruct and guide the younger generation. Though parents acknowledge that economic stresses and time pressures impinge upon family life, they make it clear that their children hold a central place in their lives, and are a major responsibility and their greatest source of satisfaction. Such parents devote “considerable” time and attention to their children, and characterize their relationship with their children as “excellent” (65 percent) or “good” (32 percent) (National Commission on Children 1991).

Day care experiences may serve as important compliments to family experiences, but they do not replace them. Children who are cared for in their early years by their parents, become attached to

their parents. The National Commission Study (1991) found that when children were asked to name the special adults in their lives, they overwhelmingly numbered their mothers (94 percent) and their fathers (82 percent). Parents also lead the list of adults children admired and wanted to emulate. Mothers were listed by 42 percent of children and fathers by 39 percent. The child abuse literature testifies that even severely abused children want above all to be reunited to their parents (Gordon 1997).

Children are dependent on their parents, and like to be thought well of by their parents. Children when asked to rank a list of major and minor "stressors" in their lives, ranked the losing of a parent highest in a list of potential stressors. Again, in developing a Feel Bad Scale, 50-60 percent were asked to respond to the question, "What happens that makes you feel bad, nervous, or worried?" Twenty items were generated; among 2,400 5th graders, the majority stressor was "conflict with parents" (Sorensen 1993).

Members of intact families feel that the attention of a parent to the needs and demands of children requires full-time *availability*, at least while the children are young, but not full-time *attention* or activity. John Robinson, author of *How Americans Use Time*, estimated that parents spend about 19 hours a week in contact with their children, only a little more than half of that time is spent on primary and secondary care activities, the rest is spent on activities with children simply present absorbing from their parents though not directly involved with them (Medrich, et al. 1982). Many aspects of parental activity do not involve the children directly.

Davie, et al. (1984), studied child activities in the home. The majority of children participated little in domestic chores with their parents, though domestic activities were potentially full of cognitively-stimulating experiences for a young child. Parents provided their children with toys of educational value, their children were more plentifully supplied with books, and children were encouraged to spend time on activities likely to develop pre-reading, writing, and number skills. More than a *task* of child care,

it is a *close relationship* between parent and child (Auerbach, 1988).

“Care about” and “care for” children are different aspects of care-giving. Child care may be seen as a task, caring about indicates a close relationship between parent and child. It cannot be assured that both elements are implied in all family care-giving situations (O’Connor, 1996). From the parent’s perspective, there is much work in the care of a child: providing food, clothing and shelter, organizing and controlling the child’s activity. But for a child who is loved much more is required; cuddling, kissing, rocking, singing to, reading to, and many periods where time seems to stand still. The family is a critical place for the development of *human capital*. In economic terms, we can say that the children accumulate possessions that they can later devote to advantageous production.

A chief goal of the parent generation is to socialize their children into *proper behavior*; the children’s goal, on the other hand, is to gain as much *independence* as possible. Children may perceive that the norms of the home and of daily life at home are structured by the strictness of parental authority, while parents vary in how far their parental directiveness is the driving force and how far children operate independently. Given some measure of parental authority, children acquire an identity at home which continues to develop in succeeding years (Mayall, 1994).

Children “belong” to a family, but together with their parents, they continually “create” the family. Children do this in part by *negotiating*. They negotiate about the division of labor within the home, settle conditions for duties and freedom, and negotiate these over time. The two negotiating parties do not, of course, have the same social rank. Parents have authority and power to punish and to reward their children. Children do not have corresponding means at their disposal. They are in a position to influence the outcome of the negotiating process with caring parents in directions which they perceive to be favorable to them (Mayall; 1994; Solberg, 1990). In this private sphere, and in the process of negotiating, children send out a whole range of emotions in the

direction of parents: frustration, aggression, insatiable curiosity, a craving for love and affection, and the need to be cuddled (Dencik, 1989). Sympathetic parents are in the best position to articulate the concerns of children, especially since so many things are heard in the privacy of the home and are transformed by their parents if they are to be understood beyond the confines of the family (Gideonse, 1982).

A close co-parental relationship demonstrates a strong link between the parents, each of whom has relationships with the child. Parents with a cooperative relationship are able to present a united authority structure. When parents agree on the rules for children and support one another's decisions, children learn that parent's authority is not arbitrary. This helps children to learn social norms and moral values that make it easier for the child to adjust to social institutions that are hierarchically organized, such as schools and, later, work places (Amato 1998). Such an upbringing is reflected in a statement by Mark Harmon when he received commendation for his quick saving of a teenager from a burning car: "It has to do with some moral character you were raised with by your parents. You either take part or you don't." (Lynch, L. 1999).

For many decades it was taken for granted that mothers were responsible for the primary care of children, especially babies and young children in the home. Hays (1996) argues that the contemporary cultural model of socially appropriate mothering takes two, not one, collateral forms today. First, there is what she calls *intensive mothering*, mothering that advises mothers to extend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising children. What Honig (1982) called the *optimal mother*, one who spends a great deal of time in the same room as the child, plays more, interacts more, has more eye contact, and provides the baby with more toys and toys of greater variety. U.S. residents will spend about \$365 per child for toys and other play equipment during the year (Edmondson and Miller 1997).

Mothers behave more adaptively, increasing the frequency of playing and stimulating the child as the child matures. Such an optimal mother is sensitive to infant signals, responsive to them, and lets the infant have control over the level of stimulation and the occurrence of times in early holding, gazing, and feeding interaction.

Only the father can impregnate, of course, but only the mother can conceive and carry the fetus through nine months of gestation and give birth. As early as 24 weeks after conception, the fetus begins to hear its mother's voice; it gradually becomes acclimatized to it. The fetus is also massaged and stroked with each movement of the mother's body as she walks, bends, sits, and moves about. Newborns who are systematically stroked and rocked make significant gains in weight, neurological development, and mental functioning. Infants more than double their birth weight in a few months with such attention (Rice 1976). Conceiving and bearing a newborn is a biological function, but it readily becomes a social role. According to Ainsworth (1978), infants who have been held tenderly and carefully early, later to respond positively to close bodily contact.

Despite the evidence that breast-feeding is best—nutritionally, psychologically, immunologically, economically—nursing a baby is also something that only the mother can do. Infants suck on the average only about 54% of the time they are in a nursing situation. This leaves ample time for non-feeding interaction between mother and child. The most frequent maternal behavior is *gazing* at the infant. The infant-directed behavior is *vocalizing*. It can be argued that vocal exchanges between mother and baby are very important to the child's development. She leans toward the baby smiling or talking, gently, and in slow tempo, allowing the baby plenty of time to mobilize a response before she gives a gentle burst of stimulation. For the baby, of the many ways of reaching his/her parents, perhaps nothing is as effective as a smile. A baby can watch a parent's face for long periods of time. Eventually it will break into a broad smile (Brazelton 1992).

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be fed breast milk for the first six to twelve months of life. Breast milk alone is said to be potent enough to keep babies alive for the first weeks of life. Breast milk contains antibodies to ward off illness; breast-fed babies suffer fewer ear and respiratory infections, rashes and allergies than do bottle-fed babies. This may be because of the breast milk they receive, it may also be because breast-fed babies are not placed as early in day care where infections are common (Glick 1997).

Breast feeding is a major tactile and potentially erotic encounter involving both infant and mother. The mechanism of sucking is simple. The infant is born with a sucking reflex that is stimulated by the touch of an object on the cheek or lips. The infant turns its head towards the object (in this case the nipple), opens its mouth and starts to suck when the nipple is placed in its mouth. Though sucking is a reflex action, practice helps. The mother is likely to notice the infant's increased skill in sucking which comes with practice. As the control of neck muscles improve, the infant becomes more and more efficient in getting into place and finding the nipple for him or herself (Sears, et al., 1957). The attachment grows in intensity.

The sucking encounter is a cooperative venture. Success depends on the behavior of the infant as well as the behavior of the mother. From the infant's side, behavior problems can occur because of inefficient sucking, a parent's dislike of the nursing situation, and lack of responsiveness. The infant can be fickle and demanding. The situation has to be "right" or he/she may refuse to participate. Robinson observed that many infants whose mothers fed them strictly by the clock refused "point blank" to take the breast after the age of three months and had to be bottle fed (Robinson 1968). The breast was not refused if the mother was "easy going" and fed her infant by "instinct" rather than by the clock.

Most mothers have jobs that do not allow the luxury of nursing on demand. Schedule of infrequent feeding causes the breast to be over-full so that when nursing begins the milk may

spurt out, and choke the infant. This interference with the infant's breathing, although only temporary, may instill fear or ambivalence toward the nursing process. Ejection and reflex failures are also related to the infant's dislike of breast-feeding, since the infant responds favorably to a constant supply of milk. Breast-feeding is significantly more successful when the amount of milk obtained from one feeding to another does not fluctuate. Active, satisfied infants establish the sucking reflex and rhythm quickly and seek the nipple when it is withdrawn. The satisfaction received is likely to increase the infant's desire to suckle his mother frequently and fully, thus stimulating the secretion of milk. The reaction of older infants is even more pronounced than that of newborn infants. The total body of older infants may show alertness and motion—rhythmic motions of hands, fingers, feet, and toes occurring along with the rhythm of sucking. After feeding, there is a relaxation that has been likened to the relaxation characteristic of the conclusion of satisfactory sexual response.

Turning to the mother's responses, the mother's physiological response to sucking and coitus are similar. Uterine contractions occur during sucking as they do during sexual stimulation. Nipple erection occurs during both, with an increase of 1 to 1.5 cm in nipple length occurring due to sexual stimulation. Milk ejection has been observed to occur in both, and the degree of milk ejection appears to be related to the degree of erotic response. The nipple-erection reflex may lead to more efficient nursing, increasing the satisfaction for the sucking infant as well as for the mother. Marked breast stimulation occurring during sucking or through fondling and caressing induces orgasm in some women.

Mothers who choose to suckle their babies have a higher general level of sexual interest than do non-suckling post-partum women. Two studies in which mothers who suckled their infants were compared with those who did not bear this out. Mothers who had positive attitudes toward suckling gave more milk and were more successful in breast feeding than those with negative feelings about suckling. Uteruses of suckling mothers return to normal size sooner. Many mothers (25% in one study) felt erotic arousal during

sucking, to the point of orgasm for a few of them. Suckling mothers not only reported erotic stimulation from their suckling experience; they were interested in as rapidly as possible returning to coitus with their husbands. Suckling mothers engaged in coitus sooner post-partum than did non-suckling mothers. They were more interested in sex, and placed more importance on the exchange of affection with others than did mothers who chose to bottle-feed their babies. According to Masters and Johnson (1966), anyone who has observed the sensuous manner in which many mothers fondle their babies will appreciate that a mother too may have contact needs. Suckling mothers are more tolerant toward erotic behavior of their offspring as well, such as the child masturbating or enjoying sex play (Sears et al., 1957:549).

Some mothers experience fear of a perverted sexual interest because of the amount of eroticism stimulated in the nursing process, and several non-nursing mothers who had nursed previous babies, refuse to nurse again because of concern and guilt over their erotic feelings. If the husband feels that nursing is disgusting or harmful, it discourages mothers from nursing and they have little erotic interest for months. Ironically, these men are denied sex relations longer than if their wives have suckled their babies. The closeness and the pleasurable feelings from the relationship may in the long run benefit infant, mother, and father, too.

Lactation failure or the inability to suckle infants fluctuates greatly over short periods of time, suggesting that it is triggered by psychological rather than physiological factors. According to American middle-class standards, the infant is expected to sleep alone, preferably in his own room. Housing the infant away from the mother started in American hospitals only about 70 or 80 years ago. Some hospitals still practice separation of infant and mother at birth, except for brief feeding encounters. When infant and mother return home, the "ideal" pattern has been set for the infant to spend much of its time alone in its room.

There was a time earlier in history when affluent mothers, after giving birth, placed their baby with a wet-nurse to be cared for until the time that the baby was weaned, at perhaps two years of age. The baby then returned home, only briefly, before again being sent out, this time to a boarding school. Since the pattern was common, and since mother was a person of some means, it is unlikely that she regarded herself as an insensitive parent, or her child as having been rejected (Kagan 1977). It appears that most mothers can dispense with breast-feeding if they choose. Most babies in the post-modern world are bottle-fed, using an infant formula. And with the use of a bottle, it is not necessary that a baby be held at all times during feeding.

In the United States, from 1984 to 1988, the proportion of mothers breast-feeding declined in the first weeks after giving birth, dropping from 60 to 52% (Schwab 1996). For many women, modernity works against breast-feeding and in favor of the bottle and the formula, in spite of the fact that many organizations and public health leaders commit themselves to the promotion of breast-feeding (Schwab 1996).

For the mother who chooses to nurse her baby and to be employed at the same time, the Norwegian government has worked out a system of accommodation. Norwegian law gives breast-feeding mothers an hour a day off until the baby is nine months old, and longer if a doctor's note confirms that nursing is necessary. According to Leach (1994), *breast milk* would be universally recommended to Americans if it could be separated from *breast feeding*. Indeed breast milk has been separated from nursing with the invention of the breast pump, which makes it possible for a mother to emit milk in one place to be fed to her baby from a bottle in another place. For example, a group of companies in California provides special rooms and breaks for milk-producing mothers. These rooms accommodate milk-producing mothers but have no nursing babies. The room is equipped instead with electric breast pumps, sterile jars and refrigerators. The milk can then be taken from the work place to the day care center, or wherever the baby is being cared for (Leach 1994). In other words, breast-feeding

is seen as a mammalian function not generally appropriate in the business world.

One gets a feeling for the attitude of the state and business toward breast-feeding, working mothers with a law passed recently in the state of Minnesota. By more than a 4-to-1 margin, a bill in the House and Senate passed, but many congressmen opposed it, some of whom said the bill would burden business unduly. The bill required employers to allow nursing mothers “reasonable unpaid break time” “to provide a private, sanitary place for expressing breast milk” in close proximity to the work area, “other than a toilet stall.” The law exempted breast-feeding mothers from “indecent exposure” laws. An employer was not required to provide break time if it would “unduly disrupt the operation of the employer” (de Fiebre 1998:2B).

Mothers who have experienced intimate contact with a baby know that “attachment” develops—the lasting, intimate relationship that develops between a baby and its mother. Attachment is a mutual, reciprocal relationship in which the child becomes a knowing partner. The relationship develops gradually during the early months and years of a child’s life (Erickson 1997). This deep attachment becomes an anchor for a secure childhood (Brazelton 1992). Behavioral scientists define attachment as an infant’s comfortable sense of trust in his or her mother. In Bronfenbrenner’s oft repeated phrase, “all kids need someone who’s absolutely crazy about them,” most often this is the mother.

Have there been any changes in permissiveness of mothers and has there been an increase or decrease in infant-mother attachment over the years? There have been some changes in overall attitudes, but little evidence of their effect on women who mother. Several studies of child behavior have examined the child-guidance literature and report a change in attitudes (Stendler 1950; Sears, et al., 1957; Gordon 1968). The 1890s and 1900s were characterized by a highly sentimental approach to child-rearing as demonstrated in popular periodicals; 1910 through the 1930s saw a rigid disciplinary approach under the influence of Watsonian behaviorism; the 1940s emphasized self-regulation and

understanding of the child; in the 1950s and '60s scientists occupied themselves with mother-love from only one perspective—the harmfulness of maternal employment for the child's well-being (Schtitze 1987); over 60 years there has been a swing from emphasis on character development to emphasis on personality development. The emphasis on personality development has continued (Martinson 1973).

There is some evidence that to start placing a child in day care in infancy, with long hours of care, can have the effect of making the mother less sensitive in her relationship with the child, and the child less affectionate to the mother. The differences are statistically significant, yet the effects are small (Shellenbarger 1997).

Earlier we mentioned that Hays speaks of two conflicting models of mothering being currently held. Besides intense mothering, which we have elaborated on, a second ideology based on a set of ideas that runs directly counter to intense mothering, one emphasizing *impersonal relations between isolated individuals effectively pursuing their personal profit in a rationalized market economy* (Hays 1996). It results in a type of double-talk that produces some feelings of guilt in parents: we adore our children, yet we embrace a market society that has little place for them.

Historically, in America, husbands did not do as much primary parenting for their children as did their wives. Why men did less and why women did more is a social, historical, and economic question, more than a biological one.

There has been some change in fatherhood over the last decades, some shift in fatherhood away from authoritarianism and toward greater involvement with family. The proportion of preschoolers whose fathers provide some child care increased from 18 percent to 23 percent for married mothers, and from 3 percent to 7 percent for single mothers from 1980 to 1991 (Folk and Yi 1994). Preschool children cared for by a dad while their mother worked was a steady 15 percent for a decade; it rose to 20 percent in 1991.

In households with working mothers, fathers do outnumber the number of children cared for in day care centers.

It makes a difference whether the mother is employed outside the home, it also makes a difference *when* the fathers begin to learn child-caring roles. Providing the father has opportunities to both learn and practice caretaking skills during the newborn period, it makes it more likely that he will not only share the responsibilities subsequently with his wife, but that he will also view these behaviors as consistent with his role. Contrary to what is expected, fathers do not engage in less social interaction with their infants than do mothers, but rather engage in more social and stimulating activities such as eye-to-eye contact, imitating the infant's facial expressions, talking to the baby, and touching and moving parts of the body. Mothers and fathers do not differ greatly in their responsiveness to infant behavior in the neonatal feeding process either. Fathers are no less sensitive or responsive to infant behavior and signals in the neonatal feeding context than are mothers, such as infant sneezing, coughing, or spitting up during feeding (Sawin and Parke 1979). At 8 months, however, mothers are more likely to hold, tend to, display affection toward, smile at, and vocalize to their infants than are fathers, regardless of relative involvement in caretaking.

Infants relate to mothers and fathers in different ways. Infants relate to their mothers mainly as attachment figures, as sources of security, whereas fathers are not as satisfactory as attachment figures but are the focus of relationships where there is some distance between the father and the child, as in play activity (Lamb 1976).

In areas of poverty, where men do not earn enough to support their families, they avoid enduring relationships with their female companions, leaving more women as single mothers with children. The Support Enforcement Amendment of 1984 and the Family Support Act of 1988 were designed to generate increases in child support obligations and improvement of monetary collections from men. For children born to married parents, it appears that forcing fathers to pay may benefit their children; for children born to

unmarried parents the outlook is less optimistic, the man is less likely to pay. Forcing him to make payments may increase parental conflict and reduce children's well-being (Garfinkel 1994).

In a national profile of non-resident fathers and their ability to pay child support, the data report that non-resident fathers could pay as much as \$34 billion more in child support if all non-resident fathers had child support orders and if those orders were fully paid (Sorensen 1997).

With an adult male and an adult female figure in the household, children are more likely to experience the secure environment of a stable family. Too much structure can stifle a youngster's creativity; excessive undisciplined life can provide freedom and short-term excitement but not much hope for a prosperous future.

Chapter 4

Children in Neighborhood and Community

Lucky the child who grows up in an intact family living in an intact neighborhood and community. A good neighborhood is defined as one in which all adults resolve to be good neighbors—to know, watch over, and support the neighbors' children and to offer help when needed to their neighbors' families (Andrews 1996). The support that families draw from good neighborhoods and good communities help shape children's lives. Community life has supportive effects on the structure and organization of the family as well. The better the quality of the home and the home environment, the more competence child displays. A strong, intact two-parent family is especially critical if the community setting is *unfavorable*; for example, families living in the inner-city. A strong family is necessary there to offset the powerful allure and the dangers of street life for children. But strong families are not commonly found in inner-city communities. Children from families enduring great psychological and economical stress are more likely to be found in lower-quality care settings. There are children in the United States, especially those from lower-income families, who are in double jeopardy from stress both at home and stress in the neighborhood and community.

In stable communities, children move from near total dependence on parents to freer association with peers; they move into associations with children and enter a special social legacy of rules, regulations, and procedures that constitute children's own way of dealing with the world around them, with each other, and with adults.

The facilities that the community provides children are of great significance. Boocock (1981) thought about the kind of community that would be best for children as well as for their parents. The interests of adults and the interests of children are not always congruent, and may be in conflict with respect to many

aspects of family life. For example, to be close to a school and a playground is an advantage to children, while to be close to work is an advantage to adults. Children's lives are enhanced in communities that are good places for persons of all ages to live. According to Boocock, an ideal community would be one with nearby jobs and flexible working hours, shopping facilities located to reduce dependence on the automobile, a variety of child care possibilities, and a variety of outdoor play possibilities.

How children spend their time largely depends on home and community. First and foremost, of course, they spend time with family members. Mothers are aware, often painfully aware, of interaction within the family. That is probably why the term "sibling rivalry" comes into play when describing the relationship between brothers and sisters. It is a theme—competition and rivalry—that has dominated literature about children. But the child's world, his social network in an open community, is made up of more people than siblings, friends and acquaintances near his own age. Trades people who call at the door, local authorities, maintenance people, bus conductors and shop assistants all enjoy talking with children, and the child who is ready and willing to talk can quickly build a circle of adult friends and acquaintances each of whom opens up a new avenue of interest for the child (Newson 1968). Denzin (1982) divides the child's contacts into six categories of persons who he or she is likely to meet and talk to at predictable times and in predictable places. The first are those termed socio-legals; they are parents or guardians, siblings and other members of the family. Second are socio-others, drawn from those who surround the family. Baby-sitters fall in this category. Third are the co-equal or peers, including siblings, playmates and children in the neighborhood and at school. The fourth class is child care experts who are of growing importance in the professionalization that is taking place in the care of children—physicians, pediatricians, child psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, lawyers, social workers, politicians and presidents who dictate and shape the broader processes by which society produces its children. A fifth class of child caretakers is drawn from TV and

other mass media. Media others who the child meets through television, radio, record players and movie theater, story books and nursery rhymes taught to younger children by parents and older children. The last group comes from the world of public places. Public place others include policemen, firemen, mailmen, clerks and strangers in stores, and individuals met in the public arena. Persons in these six categories constitute the child's larger interactive world. Half of the persons a child meets are older or younger than the child. Such is the rich experience that an open community can give to a child.

Preschool children are "minimally mobile." They make a heavy investment in the neighborhood and spend little time away from it. The neighborhood in which a child lives is crucial for the extent to which the child experiences and enjoys life. Children's behavior is in a large part a result of their own experiences in the neighborhood and only indirectly a result of their parents' interpretation of that experience. It is what children see, hear, and sense taken as whole that shapes their experiences and forms their personalities (Martinson 1992).

In day care, school, after school, over weekends, and on holidays children are together with, play with, and know the names of many children (Langsted 1992). And children met outside the home are in many ways decisively important to the child's life and development. Children in a friendly neighborhood rely on an informal network of neighbors, peers, and elders for counsel and support in times of crisis or transition. Many, in later years, mention a person who became a role-model, friend, and confidant and was particularly supportive at times when their own family was beset by discord or threatened with disillusionment.

Sadly, *for the child*, such neighborhoods and communities are less common than they once were (Clinton 1996). Children used to range more freely in the neighborhood than they do today. They were free to go most anywhere, or even to casually break social rules because adults were more child-friendly, more willing to tolerate children anywhere and everywhere. As Chawla found in a small urban community, property owners were not as worried

“about safety, security, and insurance regulations, as they are today” (Chawla 1994).

It is now regarded as self-evident to many that *social movements in modern society are endangering the lives of children*—especially changes brought by urbanization and the marked environmental changes resulting as home and work have been separated for both fathers and mothers. Earlier it was thought that society had found a place for children in the school, a place where they could grow and develop until they would some day be useful members of society. (See Chapter 9 for more on the school.) In a society where adults have constantly less time and energy to devote to the lives of children and life in association with children, children’s life is no longer self-evident, stable, and safe from destruction. It exists and thrives or fails to thrive on adult terms.

A community that lacks parental and community resources is a community without *social capital* (Coleman 1988). A community that possesses social capital is a community with emotional and economic support of many persons. Coleman regards a community’s social capital as important to children’s future success because social capital refers to the relationships among people. Relationships of young people with trustworthy, skilled, and knowledgeable adults who care about them is priceless in contributing to their future success, in getting a high school education, in finding jobs, and in gaining an understanding of the surrounding world. Being surrounded by such persons gives the impressionable young hope in the possibilities of the future. They are willing to invest in themselves, and in their future.

Communities rich in social capital have a strong strain of civic involvement that the community draws on to ensure its vitality—including citizen’s organizations, government and private sector efforts to maintain a healthy community (Walljasper 1997).

Community patterns are the result of what the market offers and not necessarily the choice of either parents or children; communities dictated by the way in which parents make a living. Occasionally one finds a neighborhood or community that is, by

chance, organized in such a way that children can move about safely and quickly, but more likely it will be a community that accommodates the parent's work life; a community where the automobile takes over the right of way, and becomes a major obstacle to children's activity. Children take for granted the environments that are provided for them and learn to live with such environments for good or ill. Nor are they in a position to lobby for better environments. Many American children live in urban ghettos, inner-city neighborhoods with overall poverty rates of 40 percent or more. There are almost double the number of children (21.5 percent) living in poverty in the United States compared to industrialized European countries. Most European countries provide a mix of tax breaks and social benefits, that, when coupled with earnings, reduce child poverty. The social conditions in deprived areas—crime, dilapidated housing, drug use, problems related to out-of-wedlock births, chronic unemployment, high concentration of bars, convenience stores, or “hot spots” where youth congregate—are more likely to be associated with places of violence and are conditions not appropriate for the rearing of children (Lynn Jr. and McGary, 1990; Levine and Rosich 1996). In no American community—city, suburb, town or country, affluent or poor—do a majority of seven to eleven year-olds describe their community as an excellent place to grow up. When asked what they would change to “make it nice for kids,” the two leading changes mentioned are to have more and better places to play and to have less crime and other bad behavior on the part of both children and adults (Boocock 1981). If the community is disorganized and children are not allowed to go outside, they are restricted even in their contact with other children. Children who live in cities, though not in urban ghettos, experience much that is artificial, man-made, of asphalt and cement, interacting streets and fast moving automobiles. Nearly half of all parents report that there is no safe place in their neighborhood for children and teenagers to gather, other than in their own homes (National Commission on Children 1991). Thirty-nine percent of high-income children in New York and over half of

low-income children are not allowed to go outside of their building, making them virtual prisoners in their own homes. This is a major tragedy for children, since more and more families live in cities. For those urban children who do venture outside, playing in the cramped space in front of the garage (for homes that have garages) is one of the most used play areas (Raundalen 1976). Virtually none of them have yards. By contrast, almost half of the rural and small town children and many of the suburban children are allowed to go outside their own neighborhood, either to specific places, such as a store or playground, or a number of blocks away from their own home (Boocock 1981). Clearly, rural areas accommodate better to young children.

Children, when they draw a picture or write about a “favorite place,” for them choose their own room 25 percent of the time (Chawla 1994). This preference for a quiet withdrawn space contrasts with the emphasis on active, public places as favorite places by children in former years. Nor are parents as confident that they can identify other people who may be perceived sources of stress for their children (Sorensen 1993). It is not so long ago that American parents encouraged independence in their children (Greenleaf, 1979).

Alarming is the growing number of children in “distressed neighborhoods,” neighborhoods defined as city pockets where children have so many strikes against them—poverty, unemployment, welfare-dependency and single mothers—that children have little hope of healthy development. “Depressed neighborhoods” are usually found in urban centers. Any number is too many for the healthy development of children. Poor families are more likely to move from one place to another, making no attachments to community, and breaking the contact with valued peers and with adults; children, in such families, are less likely to graduate from high school and college; girls are more likely to become teen mothers; and they are more likely to have difficulty obtaining satisfying jobs as young adults (MacLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Wolfe 1995).

The following guidelines for the protection of children were no doubt prepared for parents who live in fear of dangers that might lurk for their children in the community or city where they live:

- Take black and white photos or video tape your child. Do this approximately two or three times per year, including profile shots.
- Don't let your child wear clothing with their name on it. A child will tend to pay attention to anyone calling him or her by name.
- Do not leave a child unattended. Under no circumstances should you leave a child alone in a car or truck; while shopping; visiting with neighbors or friends; or running errands.
- Make sure your child always checks with you before going anywhere with anyone.
- Make sure your child learns his or her address and phone number at an early age. A second phone number of a friend or relative is also helpful.
- Teach your child how to make a collect phone call or call 911.
- Finger print your child.
- Keep a written ID log of your child. This log should note information such as birthmarks, scars and any identifying features, like moles or freckles, plus his or her weight and height.
- Make sure your child knows to scream and run if approached by anyone.
- Don't allow personal computers and on-line services to be used as electronic baby-sitters. Keep the computer in a family room rather than the children's bedroom. Get to know their "on-line friends" just as you get to know all their other friends.
- Don't allow your children to give personal information out. This information includes their address, social security number, telephone number, parent's work address/ telephone number, or the name and location of their school without your permission.

- Do not allow your child to get together with someone they chat with on-line without first checking with you. Be sure any meeting is in a public place.
- Do not allow your child to send a person their picture without first checking with you.
- Do not allow your child to respond to any messages that are mean or in any way that make them feel uncomfortable. Instruct them to tell you right away so you can contact the on-line service.
- Set up rules for being on-line. Decide upon the time of day your child can be on-line, the length of time they can be on-line, and appropriate areas they can visit on-line.

It is a sorry commentary on community life when parents become obsessed with their children's safety.

In olden times, as long as other children were present, children had life of their own, but adult awareness is a subject research, social concern, and political action today. It is only in the latter years that responsibility for children's public life has come to be seen as a public responsibility, and only belatedly so.

There are at least five *kinds of influences on child life*. First there are the things that spring out of children's need to become engaged with peers and the world around them in which they create and pass on to other children—the ones we have described. Second, there is orally transmitted tradition passed on from parents and grandparents to children in the form of stories, fables, legends, lullabies and jingles. Third are children's created objects and displays, many of which are created while children are under supervision and stimulation of day care personnel and teachers. Fourth are the children's books, toys, records, cassettes, tapes, and films, children's theater, programs on radio and TV, and organized sports, all created and largely supervised by adults and spread by way of technical means from the few to the many (Sætersdal and Ørjasæter 1981; Grambo 1984), and lastly, the outside world of community.

The play provided on playgrounds with permanent play equipment, secondary play, is now recognized as no substitute, or at best a poor substitute, for primary play, creative play with other children, since it allows little room for children's initiative. Planned playgrounds are seen as having been designed according to a playground ideology that is obsolete; play on such playgrounds results in children becoming passive, making their peace with play as entertainment or to pass the time. Physical passivity, monotonous killing of time, or destructive protest activity may result (Kjendal 1984).

The recognition that primary play is first and foremost the children's way of becoming acquainted with themselves and with the world around them is crucial. Three conditions must be met if young children are to engage in primary play: first there must be a safe milieu both within and outside the family dwelling; second there must be varied activity possibilities that engage the children's creativity; and third the play site must be close to the place where the children live. *For children to develop, they must be free, in large part, from direct adult supervision; free to play, free to explore, free to solve problems they encounter. They need to be apart from adults, but with an adult within earshot of their presence.*

For a complete life, children must also be included in the life of adults. Adults have the responsibility to explain and clarify themselves and adult life; *children must see and learn clearly from adults who dare to share adult culture* with them, for children eventually become adults (Selmar-Olsen 1990).

The concern about children and children's life gave rise to a series of studies wherein the daily life of children are taken as the central focus. Researchers ask children themselves—as well as older persons—for recollections about their childhood to find out how children view their lives, what they do, what their interests are, what they see their needs to be. The goal is to bring to consciousness the “special life form that lives and blooms so closely around us” (Skard 1979).

Play with peers is the pre-school child's dominant reality. Every stage in a child's intellectual development has a comparable play behavior style. It is activity that more than anything else is directed by children; the children themselves choose what they will do. Play takes a special role. Play is association that places children in a position to better master the specific problems they meet in their surroundings while satisfying their needs. Children's spontaneous and open relationships to life with their peers gives the basis for a necessary and emotional solidarity between them. Their spontaneous and open relationship causes them to get together, quite unconscious of creating anything, yet they are in effect participating in ongoing life and contributing to it. It springs out of children's eagerness to engage the world of people their own age.

With a growing feeling of the pressure to succeed that comes from adults, less time and opportunity is found for play. There are areas of life that are of interest to children which adults are reluctant or unwilling to speak about openly. Children live in an adult milieu; but much of adult life is hidden or taboo for children and kept secret from them. It is a situation that contributes to obedience but not necessarily to cooperation. When children get together on their own, they are on the same footing, and thereby create real possibilities for cooperation. Out of children's common needs and wishes they create an inner circle. Children need to feel that they belong. Especially clear manifestations can be found in fields where adults won't or can't carry through their duty, such as informing their children on the topics of status differences, sex and death. Themes that children are curious about, themes that force their way into being asserted through stories, songs, jokes, and rhymes (Østberg 1979).

Most of life's influences go from adults to children; children seldom try to influence adults with their life. Quite the opposite; they conceal their life as do adults. Children seem to be aware that adults are a "threat" to their fun times together. Adults, if they pay attention to their children, see innocuous, fun-loving play; something children do when there is nothing better to do. There

are schools that show children adult life; schools are important and necessary, say adults.

Adults usually avoid the question of power between children and adults; after all, adults are in a position of power. Children are aware of the power imbalance, and more willing to talk about it. The following are some examples taken from essays written by children 11-12 and 14 years old. They express this awareness of the power imbalance:

“In my opinion, at least, adults are always bossing us about, and I can’t always be bothered to do everything they say.”

“If you ask me, some adults are stupid. They fuss too much and dish out too much advice.”

“It’s my impression in adult’s opinion, children are just a nuisance and don’t know anything.”

“In a way, adults count more than us children, because you can’t really argue with adults: they always have the last word.”

“Adults never believe anything; they always think they’re right.”

“Adults are quite wise, but they don’t always use their wisdom.”

(Bardy, 1994:312)

“I want to be able to talk to children and remember what it was like. Sometimes it seems adults forget. When they throw away childish thoughts, they also throw away their imagination.”

(Snow, 1994:10E)

Child life is a state in which all is possible and open-ended; a what-it-can-make-of-you; what-you-can-make-of-it world which is intoxicating and sustaining. It is a world, unlike the adult world, where there are no achievements and no possessions. It is a world of mutually exploring whatever here-and-now possibilities present themselves. Adults often yearn for some of the playful spontaneity, wonder, and fantasy that children show in their play. It is these characteristics of play that make it dynamic, active, and

constructive, and a necessary part of childhood (Issenberg and Quisenberry 1988).

It is quite different to be introduced to civility in public settings under the watchful eye of a parent (Cahill 1987). The concerned parent is constantly reminded through smiles, glances, and other subtle indications by other adults that their children's public behavior is a reflection of their own moral character. That is particularly true in the United States where little freedom is given to the child to act on his/her own interest and curiosity without regard to social niceties. The observing parent constantly watches the child but does not say much unless the child is disruptive or otherwise commits an offensive act—an act that the child does not know is offensive to an adult. It may be something no more than to intrusively stare at someone who is not an acquaintance, especially if the appearance or behavior of the other strikes the child as being different or peculiar. This may bring a reprove from the observant parent by telling the child that it is not polite to stare. Strange adults in a check-out queue or a ticket line will often stare at a young child, smile at him or her, tousle his hair, something forbidden for a child to do to a stranger. It may be difficult for an adult to explain why this isn't proper behavior for him or her. It is difficult to adequately explain such a code of conduct to one who does not yet know or grasp the taken-for-granted sense of the reasonable, humane, and moral which the adult code of conduct reflects. The code of ceremonial conduct is "written nowhere, known to none, but understood by all"—except the ceremonially uninitiated child. By implication, in order to truly become members of contemporary civil society, children must learn to provide corrective readings for a variety of potentially offensive acts. Adults not only teach by example and direct reference but also by "priming moves." Parents will frequently ask a child who has been shown a favor or been given a gift, "What do we say?" implying that "Thank you" is a common courtesy and something the child must have already learned. Nor are children often recipient of the expression of respect and regard that they are instructed and encouraged to give to others.

Children are frequently treated as if they were absent, they are also subjected to a variety of other forms of treatment as “nonperson” by adult acquaintances and even by their own parents. I am reminded of a story told by E. F. Schumacher (1979). He recalls being seated in a restaurant next to a family of three—mother, father, and a boy eight or ten years old. The boy said he wanted liver and bacon. The father ordered three steaks without paying attention to what the son had said. The waitress repeated the order, “Two steaks; one liver and bacon” and departed. The boy looked at this mother and said, “Mommy, she thinks I’m real!”

Children are interrupted without apology. They are often the butt of jokes as unwitting sources of amusement for adults. It often seems that adults assume that young children do not experience anger, shame, or embarrassment when they are the butt of jokes or receive other kinds of indignities. They suffer such indignities until they are grown and become ritually competent in the eyes of their parents and other adults.

Children often seek secret places to play. They distance themselves from adults and older children. Is there something they do or say that others shouldn’t know about? Children are curious about many things. Or they may merely want their fantasy to run free, and they don’t want to be teased or made fun of by older children or adults. They soon discover that many things they want to know they are not free to ask about. Such as their bodies, what others look like, how they function, what differences there are between boys and girls. Undressing, or undressing each other, is one of the earliest and least organized forms of young children’s play. They are not sure what they are looking for or what they will find. They may only be curious, but in the eyes of their parents, they may be doing something “naughty” (Martinson 1994). Some of the innumerable “crimes” of children—such as attempts to show their genitals to each other—cannot be explained as a quest for genital satisfaction, but must be understood as satisfying their inordinate curiosity and perhaps even a search for identity. They do not yet understand the prudery of adults.

Children emphasize a certain amount of forbidden scatological and sex talk in their child culture. When Opie & Opie published their classic *The Lore and Language of Children* (1959), the intelligencia were astonished and horrified that children possessed such extensive underworld culture of their own and that they were “all little savages.” Being away from adults frees children to play with words, to try out forbidden terms, to inquire about matters of sex and death, for instance.

Children, as young as two or three years old, have a strong sensitivity to language and its many inflections and suffixes. Children’s phenomenal ability to pick up language is one of the wonders of growth. The words children construct inventively do not seem to be distorted or freakish in any way, but rather extremely apt, beautiful, and natural, according to the Russian poet Chukovsky (1963). Chukovsky believes that in the beginning of childhood all children are naturally inclined to play with words. He gives examples to prove his point. For example: “Where did you put the broom?” mother asks. “Over there—on the chair.” No sooner has he said it than he realized that it versified, and he begins to chant: “Over there—on the chair. Over there—on the chair.” (Chukovsky 1963:62-5).

The verses that school children modify or make up are not intended for adult ears. Much of what we call *child culture* indicates the pressures, the tension, the disagreements that children have with life the way adults are living it, and the way they are teaching it to their children. Much of it relates to problems that adults face and the children as well feel strongly about. The idea of childhood as the phase of idyllic innocence is one of the monumental myths of modern Western societies (Das 1989). Childhood is not generally a happy time of sentimental memories but at least as complex a stage in any life history as is adulthood (Sutherland 1997).

Humor plays a large role in the children’s life together. Children change what is painful into something that is fun; they make adult pretensions appear foolish; they laugh at taboos and parody their own unsuccessful efforts. Children as young as

preschool age play with language for humorous effect and mimic what they perceive as funny in adult behavior. Even in nursery school, children are creative. One observer at the Vassar College Nursery School overheard this exchange: 4-year-old boys were characterizing adult women:

Jack: It's *lovely* to see you!

Danny: I'm *so* happy to see you!

Jack: How *are* you? How have you *been*?

Danny: Sorry I had to go so sick.

Jack: (Using broad strokes of 4-year-old slapstick humor) I hope you had a good time falling down and bumping your head."

Then they laugh delightedly.

(Goodman 1970:138)

Older children seem to know almost instinctively that anything holy and solemn to adults, without a smile behind it, is only half alive. Some familiar hymns sung at Christmas time are an example. *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks by Night* is one that lends itself to alteration:

While shepherds washed their socks by night,
All seated round the tub,
A bar of Sunlight soap came down
And they began to scrub.

(Opie & Opie 1959:88)

Or the familiar carol *We Three Kings*:

We three kings of Orient are
One in a taxi, one in a car,
One on a scooter, blowing his hooter,
Following yonder star.

(Opie & Opie 1959:88)

Another of the numerous songs that are sung is a children's version of *On Top of Old Smoky*:

On top of spaghetti
All covered with cheese
I lost my poor meatball
When somebody sneezed.
It rolled off the table
and onto the floor
And then my poor meatball
Rolled out of the door.
It rolled in the garden
And under a bush
And then my poor meatball
was nothing but mush.

Forbidden words show up in many forms in children's lives—jokes, riddles, songs, verses and games. Themes that show up in the first five years as scatological are usually concerned with the anal area (Bomeman 1983). Children at this age are also interested in watching each other urinate or defecate. Around age twelve, the earlier scatological material is repressed and sex jokes and witticisms come through (Martinson 1994). Boys, especially, arouse excited emotions with the prospect of violating rules. Dirty words are a focus of rules and rule-breaking in elementary school. Both boys and girls know dirty words, but flaunting of the words and risking punishment for their use is more frequent in boys' than girls' groups. Thome & Luria (1985) describe a game played by a group of 5th graders called Mod Lib. The game consisted of a paragraph with key words deleted to be filled in by the players. The boys completed the sentence, "The _____ was ratified in _____ in 1788," with "The shit was ratified in Cuntville in 1788" (Thorne & Luria 1985:4). This is use of dirty words without any wit is intended to shock and express one's freedom.

Ribald verses are mildly indelicate and humorous to children. Forbidden words are sometimes suggested but not spoken:

The higher up the mountain,
The greener grows the grass.
The higher up the monkey climbs,
The more he shows his
Ask no questions,
Hear no lies.
Shut your mouth
And you'll catch no flies.

(Opie & Opie 1959:97)

Death is another occurrence that adults frequently do not discuss with children. Yet children are fascinated by the topic of death. Weber and Fournier (1985) interviewed 91 children and their parents regarding the subject of death. The children were interested and active and wanted to talk about their feelings toward death. Their lack of understanding was diverse. They understood more about death than their parents were willing to accept. The authors found that the children could make important contributions to their own and their parent's adjustment to the natural processes of life and death. Psychiatrists and social workers report that inner-city children as young as ten think about death "all the time." Inner-city children are often familiar with death and play a game called "funeral." They plan what they will wear, what color casket they want, the kind of flower arrangements and what music they'd like at their burial service (Child Defense Fund 1994).

Adults have almost unwittingly damaged children's lives through concentrating on their own self-interests and their thoughtlessness as they devote themselves to careers and other adult interests. Children cannot thrive under adult malign intent; they may benefit from a degree of their benign neglect, however. That realization has led in the Nordic countries to the recognition that children are society's responsibility and this leads to the

development of a *politics of children's lives*. There is a growing sense that perhaps society should take children's needs for a life of their own as seriously as they took children's needs for schooling several hundred years ago (Ørjasæter 1976), an idea worthy of emulation.

Will children's life that children create and live out survive? Many fear that it will disappear as a result of day care and all the organizational life that adults have created to fill the spare time of children. Whether it will survive will depend on how adults order society. Adults, unwittingly, and perhaps unintentionally, are on the way to taking time and space for play away from children.

Chapter 5

The Family Coming Apart

Children require stable, intact-families, creative schools and quality early childhood care for their continued development throughout the early years of life. Society can do much to provide good schools and quality-out-of-home day care; there is less that it can do to directly enhance *family life*.

Attempts have been made over the years to encourage parents and motivate them to quality parenting of their children; parent education has been in existence since the late 19th century (Palm 199). Note the use of the word *parenting* rather than *parent education* intended to include all who make a commitment to children throughout childhood and beyond.) Parenting education could include grandparents, foster and adoptive parents—in short, anyone who is raising a child (What's it's in a name? 1999). Since the family has been sacrosanct in American society, most programs are *voluntary*, and parents can determine the nature and length of time they wish to devote to parenting education.

The number of *mandated programs* is increasing, however (Current issues in parenting education 1999); for instance, divorced parents may be required by the court to attend parenting classes. Parents who abuse alcohol or drugs and those who have neglected or abused their children may also be under some control in mandatory programs. The goal is to help parents understand a child's development and to improve their parenting skills.

Of all the states, only Minnesota requires state's licensure for parenting educators as a way of ensuring qualified staff (Certification of Parent Educators 199). To be licensed in Minnesota, parenting educators must have a college degree, include 25-30 credits of child psychology and development, adult learning; child development and parent/child interaction; and curricular development. They are also required to do an internship in practice teaching. The Early Childhood Family Education

(ECFE) program is designed for all Minnesota families with children from birth through kindergarten. Over 283,500 children and parents participated in ECFE during 1996-97; this is approximately 42 percent of the state's children from birth to kindergarten (A Parenting Program Sampler 1999).

There have been a number of changes in emphasis in parenting programs (Palm 1999). Between 1910 and 1920, family parenting and infant mortality were addressed in government programs. Between WWI and WWII behaviorism was the fad, emphasizing learning as a way of influencing children's behavior—attention to the child's environment was seen as all-important. This period saw dramatic progress in the professionalization of parenting education as a separate discipline. The National Council on Parent Education was incorporated at this time and produced a professional journal. During the 1930s and 1940s early childhood education was seen as the place for parenting education. Parenting education gradually evolved from an emphasis on children's physical health to concern with their psychological development. Child abuse was identified as a critical issue in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the 1990s efforts to reach fathers—especially young and unmarried fathers—to engage them in concern and care for children they had fathered was emphasized. The focus on fathering began to shift from the premise that fathers were not financially important in the healthy development of their children to the premise that fathers are theoretically quite important in the healthy psychological and socioeconomic development of their children (Mackey 1996). Parenting educators are encouraged in that there are over 50,000 parenting education programs now in existence in the United States.

The family has been called the first educational institution that a child experiences. Yet, Lasch (1977) reported that the family has been slowly coming apart for more than 100 years. The Gallup Poll conducted in 1977 found that almost half of all Americans surveyed believe that family life had deteriorated in recent years. To make up for part of the lack, the school has become involved more and more in traditional family functions. At the 1960 White

House Conference on Children and Youth, a proposal that family-life education be part of the school curriculum at all age levels drew some opposition. But when it was put to a vote, the resolution passed overwhelmingly. As Seeley et al. (1956) has observed, the school has shifted from *curriculum* to *customer* services in that it is concerned with the socialization of the child (the customer) and not only with the teaching of the curriculum. The school became concerned for the social experiences of children as preparation for future family life and citizenship (Martinson 1970).

But has the family been coming apart? *For the sake of the child*, we must review the evidence: Some family circumstances that are potentially threatening to children are: (1) living with only one parent, (2) fathers not taking responsibility for their children, (3) divorce and no-fault divorce, (4) the fading popularity of marriage, (5) adult experimentation with new family forms, (6) lack of education of parents, (7) child poverty, (8) both parents employed outside the home, (9) violence in and outside the home, and (10) lack of a supporting community.

Living with Only One Parent

The majority of children (61 percent) spend some time in a single-parent household before their 18th birthday, or less than half of all children can expect to spend their entire childhood living with their married parents (Jansen 1994). In fact, the majority of children born since the 1920s have been exposed to at least one of the following: parental separation, divorce or death, a sibling born out of wedlock; job search or part-time employment of the father; or paid employment of the mother (Hernandez, Saluter, and O'Brien 1993). Single parenthood may represent personal freedom for adults who choose it; it is generally regarded as harmful for children. Children in single-parent families receive substantially less direct, day-to-day care and attention from parents than do children in two-parent families. Mother-alone families entail the higher risk of child social maladjustment in the first grade, a risk that grows stronger by the third grade (Kellem 1997), and children

are more likely to be poor, delinquent, neglected, drug-addicted and badly educated in a single-parent family.

Children in *one-parent families* tend, on average, to experience the following: (1) the family has less income—48 percent of female-headed families with children at home live in poverty; (2) children receive less care and attention from parents; (3) they are exposed to greater personal and parental stress; (4) they experience more school-related health and behavioral problems; (5) they complete fewer years of education; and (6) work in lower-status occupations and earn lower income during adolescence (Hernandez, Saluter, and O'Brien). McLanahan and Sandefur conclude in their careful study, *Growing Up With a Single Parent*, that “the evidence is quite clear, children who grew up in a household with only biological parent are worse off on the average, than children who grew up in a household with both of their biological parents” (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994:1).

Children are less likely to report wanting more time with their parents in a two-parent family. They are more likely to report that their mothers and fathers *always* respect their ideas and opinions and are less likely to feel that their mothers or fathers miss “a lot” of events and activities that are important to them. A parent in a two-parent family is also more likely to coach a child’s team or to help with a school trip or a class project.

The rise in mother-only families represents a historic change in the lives of children. By 1989 about one-fifth of children lived in mother-only families; sixty-three percent lived with divorced or separated mothers, thirty-one percent with never-married mothers and six percent lived with widowed mothers (Hernandez 1993). The proportion of children in all mother-only families who lived with unwed mothers, between 1959 and 1988, increased from two percent to thirty-two percent, and the proportion of poor children increased from about four percent in 1959 to about forty percent in 1988.

Life is hard both for a single parent and for a child of a single parent. More than half of single parents report worrying all or most of the time that their family income will not be enough to

meet their expenses (National Commission on Childhood 1991). A median annual income for a single mother who never married is approximately \$9,898, whereas the median income for a two-parent family is approximately \$46,195 (Slants and Trends 1997).

The increase in female-headed households in the past 20 years is occurring among Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, among the middle-class, as well as among the poor. In 1960 only 5 percent of all children born were to unmarried mothers; in 1988 more than 25 percent were (Hernandez 1993). The number of children living with only one parent doubled between 1970 and 1989. There were about 12 percent of the children living with only one parent in 1970, usually their mother, and approximately 25 percent in 1989, and more than 30 percent by 1991, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census 1994. Whereas *biological and social* fathers were the traditional breadwinners between 1920 and 1970, an increasing proportion of children lived with a breadwinner mother who worked at jobs away from home. The trend leaves children with impaired financial support, fewer alternatives for establishing intergenerational relationships, and fewer adult role-models.

The rise in *dual-earner* and *one-parent family systems* has been extremely rapid. It is the dominant living arrangement for a majority of children. By 1980 nearly 60 percent of children lived in dual-earner or one-parent families. By 1989, 70 percent lived in such families and by the year 2000, "the proportion of children living in such families could exceed 80 percent" (Hernandez 1993:135). Over 70 percent of all American households in 1960 were made up of dad as breadwinner, mom as homemaker, and their children. By the 1980s the "traditional" families accounted for less than 15 percent of the nation's households (Mintz and Kellogg 1988).

Fathers Not Taking Responsibility for Their Children

Approximately 19 million American children grow up in homes without fathers. According to the Census Bureau, nearly three-fourths of men living alone are ages 25 to 64 and half of them have

never married. One reason children grow up without fathers is because biological fathers are not marrying or continuously living with the child's mother. The joblessness of urban men is one reason why they do not marry. This creates a problem for children, for the one place where strong two-parent families may be critically important is in the inner city, where the family is necessary to offset the allure of the street—the very place where the two-parent family is least likely to be found (Wilson 1989). Twelve million families were maintained by women with no husband present in 1995. As Mackey concluded, “there may be wisdom in at least thinking about the costs of such a fatherless system before too much mischief is achieved (Mackey 1996:222).

Divorce and No-Fault Divorce

Divorce is responsible for about forty-six percent of single-parent households; out-of-wedlock births account for twenty-six percent; twenty-one percent are due to marital separation and seven percent due to the death of a spouse (American Demographic Desk Reference 1992). Since 1960, the divorce rate has more than doubled and remains higher than in other Western countries. Children living with a divorced parent are four times more likely to be poor (Berg 1997), for the real standard of living for men rises about 73 percent with divorce while the family they leave behind suffers a 42 percent drop in income (Zuckerman 1998). It is understandable that the man is often required by the court to pay a large proportion of his income to his ex-wife (Mackey 1996). Data from 1982 to 1986 show the mean percentage of divorces petitioned by men were less than the percentage petitioned by women; the higher percentage occurred when no children were involved. Mothers, therefore, are twice as likely to initiate proceedings to separate children from a parent than are fathers. Most children in the United States stay with their mothers after their parents divorce (Mackey 1996).

All but three states adopted the principal of *no-fault divorce* within a span of five years. Under no-fault a couple can initiate divorce proceedings without first proving that either was at fault

for the breakup. Rather than sue the other marriage partner, a husband or wife can obtain a divorce by mutual consent or on such grounds as incompatibility, living apart for a specific period, or “irretrievable breakdown” of the marriage. In an effort to reduce the bitterness associated with divorce, many states change the terminology used in divorce proceedings, substituting the term *disillusion* for the term *divorce* and eliminating any terms denoting fault or guilt. Neither father nor mother need confess committing any transgression or having done anything amiss. There is little social opprobrium for either husband or wife who divorce. The disadvantage to the children is that one parent, usually the father, is “systematically peeled away” from his children (Mackey 1996). Remarriage is still the norm for both men and women. Men, separated from their children, have ample opportunity to be someplace else with someone other than the mother of their children. Margaret Mead once said that fathers are a biological necessity but a social accident.

If adults continue to give up on marriage and divorce continues at the present level, children born during the 1980s will be the first to experience high divorce rates, which peaked in 1979, and they may experience the highest portion ever living in mother-only families. Immediate and sometimes enduring feelings of distress, depression, fear, sadness, yearning, worry, rejection, loneliness, anger, as well as guilt occur when their parents become separated or divorced (Hernandez, Saluter, and O’Brien 1993). The fact that children *attribute* their difficulties to their parents’ separation or divorce is suggestive though not conclusive—other factors may contribute to their difficulties.

The less care and attention received from parents in their younger years, the lack of ties to community resources. Children are exposed to greater personal and parental stress and deprived of important community resources. They have more school-related health and behavior problems as well (Hernandez 1993 and McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Courts have moved away from the concept of alimony—an allowance made to one spouse by the other for support pending or

after legal separation or divorce—and replaced it with a new concept called *spousal support or maintenance*. In the past courts regarded marriage as a life-long commitment and, in cases in which the husband was found guilty of marital misconduct, held that the wife was entitled to life-long support. Now, maintenance can be awarded to either the husband or the wife, and it can be granted for a limited time to permit the spouse to go to school, acquire skills, and become self-supporting. Today, the courts award only 15 percent of divorced women alimony and in most cases the amount is small—averaging approximately \$250 a month—and granted temporarily until the wife reenters the work force. Also, courts, following the principal of equality, generally require ex-husbands to pay only half of what is needed to raise the children, on the assumption that the wife will provide the remainder (Mintz and Kellogg 1998).

The Fading Popularity of Marriage

In the past the church and the courts regarded marriage as a life-long commitment; most Americans also profess to value marriage, yet there is strong evidence that the importance of marriage and intact families has diminished, as witness less social constraints on divorce, out-of-wedlock child births, and single parenthood (National Commission on Children 1991). *Marriage is fading* as the only accepted childbearing institution.

It may be due to the changing values of mainstream American society in which the virtues of family stability, mutual support, and religiously-based commitment to the marriage vows no longer command the deference they once did. According to Census data, the number of couples choosing to live together rather than marry climbed markedly between 1980 and 1991. As early as the 1980s, egalitarian arrangements were more fragile and prone to separation or restructuring along more traditional formats than were less egalitarian arrangements. Couples living together almost invariably meant a decrease in share of the children who lived with their fathers. Thirty-six percent of children age 11-16 in 1981 had no contact with their father during the past five years

and did not know where he was living. Only sixteen percent saw him an average of once per week (Hernandez 1993). If the children are no longer a vital source to him, then the institution designed to secure the legal rights of children—marriage—becomes less important. On the other hand, the importance of the relationship between men and women is probably increased to the advantage of men as lovers and sex partners but at the cost of (or to the relief of) men as fathers.

Cohabitation is an arrangement whereby a man and a woman live together as husband and wife but without being legally married. Marriage and cohabitation differ in that, if the couple has children, the biological father has no legal responsibility for the child or children. A crucial question is why young biological fathers produce children without securing the parental social rights through marriage. After all, children do, and increasingly may, provide emotional support in the family for both mother and father. Nevertheless, children do not represent a divorce which biological fathers on a broad scale fight to defend (Jensen 1994). Whether a *cohabiting relationship* is formalized through marriage or not does not matter if children do not represent a resource which men find important to control. Their unions are not stable; family disillusion is two to three times higher for cohabiting parents. From a *child's point of view*, consensual unions, on balance, make for unstable families.

The cohabiting woman becomes a mother by having her paramours child; her paramour does not become a *social* father to the child because the relationship is not legally, or socially recognized; he may or may not feel morally responsible for the child. It is a human tendency if a person has the chance to maximize his or her own freedom without assuming the responsibility for a child, they will tend to avert themselves of the opportunity. "A woman can give birth with or without the existence of a social father" (Mackey 1996:4). As women's standing in economic terms has increased, the preclusion of men from the role of social fathers also increases (Mackey 1996). Marriage, for the man, can be superfluous; for the well-employed woman it may also

become superfluous in that she no longer needs the support of the father. It does not turn out to be superfluous for any child born to the union, however.

Adults Experimenting with New Family Forms

Cohabitation is an old enough form of coupling so that it is generally accepted, or tolerated, within society. Cohabitation has not been legally allowed for in America as it has in Sweden. The purpose of accepting cohabitation as “legal” is as protection for the biological mother, for the division of any property they may have accumulated, and for the protection of the children.

A one-parent family form is “created” when a woman consciously decides to become a mother though she has no husband, and arranges with a male friend or a donor to impregnate her. This form is not yet generally socially recognized or accepted.

Another family form, that is completely accepted, is a family created through the adoption of child by a man and woman who are husband and wife. Less well socially accepted is a relationship in which two homosexuals or two lesbians apply for the right to adopt a child.

The consequences for children of adults experimenting with new family forms creates *dissembling families*. Adults who wittingly or unwittingly conceal or disguise the fact that their choice may serve their needs but short-changes the slow, tedious, time-consuming work of giving priority to the care and raising of the children.

Lack or Absence of Parental Education

The *amount of education* parents receive influences their children’s ultimate education attainment. Studies suggest in both the short-run and long-run that parents with relatively high educational attainment represent an important resource from which children benefit—a stepping stone to success. Conversely, children whose parents have completed relatively few years of schooling are found to be comparatively disadvantaged in their chances of achieving success (Hernandez, Saluter, and O’Brien

1993). Children born to not-well-educated mothers of all races are more likely than others to be mildly retarded, according to federal research; mothers who never finished high school were four times as likely to have mildly retarded children. Rarney, a child development researcher at the University of Alabama, was concerned about the poor who because of their circumstances may be doomed to low IQs that keep them in a life of poverty. He looked for ways to prevent mental retardation from developing and ways of improving child performance in very young children. He sent educators into poverty-stricken homes once a week for eight years to teach parents how to stimulate their children. He had teachers read and play with babies for fifty weeks each year for several years, and as the children grew, designed programs to match the individual curiosity they displayed. What he found was that in extremely disadvantaged families it was not enough to teach parents. It was necessary to deal with the children directly (Dawson 1996).

Child Poverty

It has been argued that higher poverty in the United States is the price paid for greater upward mobility, but research shows that no such trade-off exists for the poor. The American poor are less likely to escape from poverty after one year than are the poor in Europe; consequently, a larger percentage of poor households with children remain poor for an extended period in the United States (McFate 1991). In 1994 Commerce Department Study showed that the number of people working for poverty-level wages had increased 50 percent since 1979 (Nelson-Pallmeyer 1998). This was accompanied by a proliferation of consumer goods and by increases in the quality of consumer products. The relative poverty rate *increased for children*, largely during the 1980s, reaching the same level that was experienced almost 30 years earlier, in 1949.

Growing up is not easy for the current generation of American children; the passage to adulthood is more daunting than ever. Today's children, the 66 million United States children under the age of 16, face a world more hostile than any parents can recall. We

have been particularly remiss in protecting children. Despite a technologically-advanced economy, one can find families with children in the United States living in impoverished conditions not unlike those of the Third World. Two million children die each year from easily preventable infectious diseases. The Census Bureau reported that nearly 10 million children—or 1 out of 7—had no health insurance in 1995. 1.4 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. 80 million children do not attend primary school.

Poverty has become increasingly urbanized, with a remarkable change in the concentration of poor people in the United States in only slightly more than a decade. The disorganization of urban families in poverty is not a function of the inherent matriarchal tendency, but a rational adaptational response to conditions of privation. Families are heavily represented in the poverty population that is highly urbanized. Biological fathers are much less likely to marry if single, or to marry if divorced or widowed. Teenage pregnancies are also strongly associated with being reared in female-headed families, poverty, and ghetto residents. Children are increasingly growing up in families without fathers, not only because more mothers are getting divorced, separated, or becoming widows, but because more are not marrying. The joblessness of urban men is one of the major reasons why men and women do not to marry.

Both Parents Employed

The proportion of children whose *mothers were employed* increased from 9 percent to 59 percent between 1940 and 1989. America reached a point where the typical standard of living could be achieved by many families only if the husband and wife both worked for pay outside the home. In 1997, 9.8 million workers, representing 6 percent of the work force, had two jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Stagnating wages, downsizing, and rising family expenses kept many women in the labor force (Ginsberg 1997).

Many *parents* report *working* longer hours than is commonly considered full-time. One in two fathers and one in eight mothers

indicated that they regularly worked more than a 40-hour week, leaving less and less time to be with children. Mothers who work full-time or more are less likely to feel they spent the “right amount” of time with their children. They are more likely to feel that they miss events that their children considered important. Children whose fathers work long hours express a desire to spend more time together (National Commission on Children 1991).

Fewer women aspire to full-time careers of motherhood and homemaking. Instead they join the labor force for independence and self-fulfillment or for economic reasons (Mintz and Kellogg 1998). The decrease in parental involvement in children’s lives, which children feel is due in part to the pace of life that has been so accelerated that parents are under pressure. There is simply not enough time to attend to all the competing demands, and one demand that suffers is time spent with children. Parents spend an estimated 40 percent less time interacting with their children today than they did in 1950 (Walsh 1994).

Some authors claim that marriage is surviving and adapting (Stinnett, Chesser, and DeFrain 1979), but whether it is surviving and adapting *from the child’s point of view*, is a moot question. We know that parental support is beneficial to children. While more women are working outside the home, more men are sharing commitment to family by sharing in housework and child care. When fathers show warmth toward mothers and children, the marriage and family survive. Fathers affect children’s well-being in the extent that they strengthen the co-parental alliance (Amato 1998). A couple of generations ago, it is said that American men understood what it meant to be fathers. Fathers today *believe* they understand, as well, since women take jobs outside the home and men are expected to commit themselves to sharing housework and child care. Yet, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in their study of 4-year-old children found that when it came to the daily tasks of feeding, playing with, and keeping an eye on the child, fathers took charge without the mother’s help less than hour a day on average. There are other, more subtle perhaps, ways of sharing commitment and support by

providing emotional support, sharing respect, communicating openly, negotiating and compromising. Just wanting children, receiving love and emotional satisfaction from them and enjoying playing with them is supportive (Mackey 1996).

In past generations, most of the women would have quit their jobs and stayed home when they married or had children; today they remain at work. This represents a major, historical change in the lives of parents and children; these changes have varying consequences. On the negative side, mothers and fathers who work outside the home are not available to tend to the day-to-day care of children. On the positive side, the family earns more income and stays above the poverty level if both work. For many families, sheer necessity is a reason for mother's employment. Some families remain in poverty even though both parents work.

According to Mackey, women, if given control of their own reproductive histories, and if allowed access to paid employment outside of the home, will limit their births and avail themselves of the economic opportunities (Mackey 1996).

Violence

Experts believe that the increased economic stress on families and crisis caused by *drugs and violence* have fueled the rise in abuse and neglect which is intensely tied to poverty. In particular, the use of crack cocaine by mothers has contributed to a large increase in reports of abandoned or neglected infants. In environments with high density of disorganized families, where quantity and quality of parenting is minimal, where family conflict and disruption is high, and where abandonment of children is more common than not, crime and violence are more likely to occur. The incidence of inner-family violence remains extremely high (Levine and Risich 1996). Studies have consistently shown that family violence is related to such stress factors as poverty, unemployment, part-time employment of males, pregnancy in the case of wives, abuse, and single-parent status in the case of children. Other factors that shape the likelihood of family violence toward children and adults include social isolation, excessive drinking, drugs, the presence of

children with special needs and a large number of children in the household (Levine and Risich 1996).

Nor is *violence* toward children only characteristic of poor families. The data suggest that almost every American child has been struck by a parent, that it begins in infancy and reaches a peak of at least 90 percent at age 3 or 4. Approximately one-quarter of late teenagers (15-17) continue to be struck and the frequency, severity, and duration of striking varies considerably. When, in 1979, the Swedish Parliament voted overwhelmingly (259 to 6) for a law making it illegal for parents to spank their children, an opponent referred to the law as a "totally absurd, absolutely ridiculous law." Yet five other countries followed suit: Finland (1984), Norway (1987), Austria (1989), Cyprus (1994), and Denmark (1997). The United States has not followed suit (Hodgkin 1997). Not hitting a child can have profound and far-reaching benefits for humanity, according to the American sociologist, Strauss (1994); a society that brings up children by caring, humane and non-violent methods is likely to be less violent, healthier, and wealthier. Methods children use to resolve conflicts are very likely to be similar to those they observe their parents using to resolve marital conflicts, and those which the children have personally experienced when disciplined by his/her parents (Strauss, Gelles, and Steinmitz 1980).

Nearly three-quarters of all *murders* of children in the industrialized world occur in the United States, according to an international report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The United States had the highest rate of childhood homicide, suicide, and firearms-related deaths of any of the world's 26 richest nations. The suicide rate for children aged 14 and younger is double that of the rest of the industrialized world.

The steady increase in reported *child abuse* and neglect is one of the past decade's most troubling trends. Nearly 3 million children were reported abused or neglected in 1992, about triple the number reported in 1980. For example, child neglect is growing faster than all other child maltreatment categories in Minnesota, according to the Department of Human Services.

The picture is especially bleak for children growing up in families that cannot avail themselves of the *support* a good community can give them. Child abuse is now recognized as a national problem, with over three-fourths of the abusers being parents. Many children are killed the first day or within the first few weeks of life; the risk of homicide sharply declines after the first year of life (Gartner 1991) though homicide is one of the five leading causes of child mortality in the United States. The United States and New Zealand have the highest homicide rate for children age 1 to 4. As children grow to school age and older, fire arms are a predominant method of death (Finkelhor and Duiupa-Leatherman 1994). Gun deaths are also a leading cause of suicide among children and youth.

With both father and mother working outside the home while there are still children in the home; with marriage less attractive, less necessary, or less feasible; with relaxed social constraints on marriage and major concern for the convenience of one or both parents and less concern for children; with out-of-wedlock child birth and no subsequent marriage in view (3 of every 10 births in the United States were to unwed mothers in 1993) an almost eight-fold increase since 1940; with the increase in single parenthood and no regard to the age of the mother, *children are in trouble*. By *placing the children* out of the home for care, the quality and variety of life enjoyed by parents may be enhanced; but it may not be for children. (This is a question dealt with in Chapter 6) For parents to feel that the only way left is for a single parent or an impoverished two-parent family is for all able-bodied members to work, they sacrifice their roles as major child caretakers. The family is not an emotionally intense child-rearing unit if a single parent or both husband and wife, depart each day for work, and the children are placed under day care, the family is no longer a continuing unit of interacting personalities. The family no longer fulfills the childbearing function; no longer are children domesticated by their parents.

Children have paid a high price for the social transformation for the 1960s and 1970s—the spiraling divorce rates, the rapid

influx of mothers in the labor force, child poverty, and the relaxed attitude to sexuality (Mintz and Kellogg 1998). By dismantling such families, which have become faulty child-rearing systems, we have found child day care to be an alternative institution to take over the bulk of the child-rearing functions.

Chapter 6

Out-of-Home Care of Children

What happens to children who would rather stay at home but whose wishes are at odds with their parents' wishes? They may have no alternative but to go into out-of-home day care. The child may be immature; their maturity will take place in day care. There they are protected in their vulnerability. Important things must be learned, such as social tasks, socially required skills and competencies. Day care defers child's play, or the purposelessness of doing nothing. Day care takes "hold of children's time, organizes it, manages it, curricularizes it and simultaneously controls the next generation" (Ennew 1994:143). In day care they become budding adults under the guidance and supervision of professional day care workers, if they are lucky, otherwise under the supervision of other adults, but not their parents (Brady 1994). Parents need not fear that they will learn what they should not learn since child-care institutions ordinarily represent the established order and conventional values of the society.

The circumstances under which very young children are cared for have changed dramatically in the last 40 years. More infants are in care by non-family members today than ever before (Lally 1995). Infants as young as 3 to 6 weeks of age can be found in infant care. In American society, infant/toddler care is not considered a profession. It is seen as care that anyone can do, that until recently was done for no pay as part of daily family life, and that needs no training.

Several years ago the Carnegie Corporation of New York launched a major national initiative to bring to public awareness what they called the "great crisis" of infant neglect (Carnegie Corporation of New York 1994). Many infants were spending 35 or more hours a week in substandard care.

In 1989, about 48 percent of all preschoolers had a parent in the home full-time who was not in the labor force. An additional 12

percent had parents who personally provided the preschoolers care (often by working different hours or days, or by the mother combining work and child care), and about 15 percent were cared for by other relatives who often did not live in the preschooler's home. Hence, a total of 27 percent of preschoolers were cared for by relatives of the parents who were available full-time for child care, and about 25 percent were cared for by non-relatives, approximately one-half of these in organized care facilities.

Between 1940 and 1980, the proportion of children aged birth to 17 years living with a grandparent, but not with a parent in the home, remained nearly stable at 2 percent or less. Among children in one-parent families, the proportion with a grandmother in the home dropped by about one-half between 1960 and 1980 (Hernandez 1993). Other adult relatives, who lived in the preschooler's home, may be viewed by parents as particularly appropriate providers, since they share the same values as the parents, but it is not clear that other relatives have stepped in to fill the increased need for care.

Out-of-home care of children is of several kinds: there is relative or neighbor care; family day care; varieties of day care of questionable organization and questionable quality; licensed or registered day care; twenty-four-hour care; preschool and Head Start; school-age care—and one in-home care arrangement, the au pair or nanny. There is no systematic, overall plan for the use of these services; it is up to each couple to find its way through the maze of arrangements.

Relatives or Neighbors

When arrangements are made outside the immediate family, the preference is for relatives, particularly a maternal grandmother, or for neighbors who are known personally or by local reputation.

The most troubling part of child care for parents is the placing, out of the home, of a newborn baby, or children from birth to six months of age. Parents try to keep child care in the family if at all possible. They prefer that a young child be cared for by a grandparent or other relative. But even if a grandparent does

agree to take care of the child, he or she does not normally move into the child's home. Data from a nationally representative sample of grandmothers found that, overall, 43 percent of grandmothers helped provide care for their grandchildren on a regular basis. Four types of grandmothers were identified. "Homemaker" grandmothers (19%) and "young-and-committed" grandmothers (23%) helped provide care for their grandchildren. "Remote" grandmothers (32%) and "frail" grandmothers (26%) did not provide care. Caring did not prevent grandmothers from assuming other roles within and outside the family (Baydar and Brooks-Quin 1998).

It is questionable how much care parents give to choosing a day care for their child. It is also questionable whether or not they have a choice among a number of types of day care. Studies report that mothers collude with carers in the matter of accepting inferior standards of care for their children. They seem reluctant to query carers or to voice their own opinions. There is little or no "shopping around" for the best form of care, and "settling in" arrangements are rare; the child's first time in day care usually being his/her first day in care of any kind. It may be that the lack of choice may force women to accept that the arrangement will work (Phadraig and Ghiolla 1994).

Professionals express concern about parents who never enter a provider's home from the time they make a care arrangement by telephone. Parents are urged to visit care facilities and homes frequently and not to enroll children in places where they do not permit drop-ins (Kahn and Kamerman 1987). Leach (1994) is of the opinion that even the very best care seldom gives babies and young toddlers anything they positively need. New research shows that social development can come much earlier than previously thought. Babies and toddlers can form close relationships when given a chance (Eveld 1997).

Infants and toddlers learn many lessons from caregivers, such as what to fear; which of one's behaviors are seen as appropriate; how one's messages are received and acted upon; how successful one is at getting one's needs met by others; what emotions and

what intensity level of emotions one can safely display; and how interesting one is (Tally 1995). Critics say that the child is likely to suffer psychologically from lack of affection and tenderness (Heckscher 1994).

The decision to become a parent and to combine parenting with dual careers is or at least should be connected to long-term commitments, since social policy regarding child care would be expected to provide the conditions which render such long-term commitments as reliable as possible. This implies that the availability and the quality of day care and places in preschool should be constant in the ages of potential parents and the fees for these institutions should not rise more rapidly than the prices for other consumer goods. America has been negligent in making such provisions. America has had a special passion for building institutions, such as public schools, prisons, insane asylums, reformatories. Featherstein (1971) asks if it is too much to expect that day care centers would be conceived as meeting the needs of “declining” institutions, such as the family, the village community, and the church, institutions that formerly were responsible for most of the child care.

Family Day Care

A care center may offer several teachers trained to adjust the activities to the development of the child. Even though regulated care may have significant advantages, unregulated care has a considerable cost advantage over center-day care. Low-earning mothers do not feel they can afford to pay for quality day care. Many or most parents cannot conceive of placing infants, or even toddlers, in day care centers. If no relative is available to help, *family day care* suits the priorities of those who would like developments to be localized, community-based and as informal as possible. They may feel comfortable with a mother in a home, who may meet the child's needs, or may not meet a particular child's needs at all. For one thing, they are accessible. Caregivers who operate in their own home may assume a unique set of rules and responsibilities that appeal to a parent. Parents are more relaxed

about leaving an infant or toddler because family day care “seems” more like mother’s care and thereby more desirable. On the other hand, on entering a quality day care center, parents sense that it does not feel like an extension of their own home. How parents choose a day care center is complicated and highly variable. Whether the present conviction about “high quality child care” based on “child development principles” are a part of all parents’ choices of day care is doubtful.

There are many dimensions to the services offered by a woman in family day care. She is a business manager, she is responsible for keeping records of expenditures and income, for she must collect fees from parents for service provided; she must plan menus and prepare the food for meals to be served—prepare snacks. She has to be willing to serve lunches twice every day when she agrees to care for kindergarten children, some who attend morning kindergarten, some who attend in the afternoon, as well as providing breakfast for those who come early in the morning, go to school, return after school and have a snack. She must also purchase food to be utilized, as well as other supplies, such as paper towels, crayons and paper, and diapers for the very young. She must also keep an inventory of all supplies and order what is needed. She must prepare special education projects that require creative resourcefulness, reading stories to the children, comfort and cuddle the youngsters in need of affection (avoiding the risk of sexual harassment), settle arguments, change diapers. Many providers do the basic toilet-training for children when the child is ready. They must supervise the children when they are outdoors playing and take them on occasional trips.

The work day for a family day care provider is long. The provider’s work day usually ends about twelve hours after it began, at 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. when the last parent arrives to pick up his or her child. A ten- or twelve-hour day is not unusual without substitute coverage to enable the provider to take a break or a sick day, a vacation, or just some personal time.

Even the lack of taxation on their earnings does not make the weekly earnings competitive with low-paid workers. Yet, when the

income supplements a spouse's earnings and justifies deductions as "home costs" as a business expense, they may feel their earnings satisfactory.

Some providers also prefer the autonomy that comes with self-employment and some may shy away from involvement with a day care agency or support group. Many are unaware of the existence of professional licensing and accrediting agencies and the support system that can be provided. Others are deterred from applying because of the complexities of licensing and accreditation and choose to operate their day care facility illegally.

The chance to provide care for their own children is another important consideration. Having a few more children in care supplements her household income, and may not be too burdensome if she finds care for children and the contact it gives with their parents to be appealing, also it provides a badly needed community service. Some providers see themselves as temporarily caring for the children of neighbors while raising their own children. Many of them enter and leave the field each year, so that constant recruitment is necessary. In all but 15 states, parental day care homes serving three or four unrelated children are exempted from mandated regulations under a system that includes investigation (Zinsser 1991).

Each family day care provider who chooses to work with a service usually works with a supervisor who answers parent's questions, providing feedback and input in daily routines, and conducts intake procedures for each new family. Sponsoring agencies have substitute providers available to relieve the provider in case of emergency and when in need of a day off or a vacation. Agencies also make available equipment and materials used by family providers.

Why do the family day care homes not get a license or register, affiliate with agencies to get the help and support they need? There are some, of course, who meet and exceed all licensing, registration, and certification requirements, but others do not. Most providers are breaking the law or avoiding the law. According to a study made 15 years ago (*Report of the National Day Care*

Home Study-Summary 1981), family day care homes appeared to be a positive environment for children. It was observed that caregivers spent a considerable portion of their day in direct interaction with children and the time spent with children seemed to be appropriate to the needs of children of various ages. Caregivers rarely expressed any negative affect toward the children. The caregiver's homes were generally safe, home-like environments which were less structured and homogenous with respect to children's age than were day care centers (Kahn and Kamerman 1987). A recent study of family day care, on the other hand, reports that home-based care is of poor quality and the vast majority of caregivers are not equipped to help children develop properly. The most in-depth survey done in a decade, released by Families and Work Institute, ranked only 9 percent of the homes as providing good quality care and found only half of the children to be securely attached to the person who took care of them. More than a third of the homes were considered of such poor quality that they were potentially harmful to a child's health, growth, and more than half were rated only as adequate or custodial, meaning that they would not harm, but neither would they enhance a child's development. Perhaps as many as 75 percent of family day care homes are not legally registered.

Because infant care is very expensive, with three or so infants for one caregiver, and hard to locate, parents may not be able to purchase high quality programs for infants and thus place their children at risk (Hofferth and Delch 1994). The most prevalent arrangement for children are those about which we know the least—arrangements operated outside the sphere of government regulation. Among subsidized children whose parents can afford day care, the concentration has been on the 3-5 year-olds and hence on centers (Watkins and Durrant 1987). According to Kahn and Kamerman (1987), insisting that care be licensed would not be difficult were the general public to decide that such registration is essential and would be worth the cost.

The most compelling argument against day care for young children emanated from those in the mental health field who stressed the importance of an intense primary attachment to a mother. Bowlby's research on infant attachment and maternal deprivation is important (Bowlby 1966). Likewise, René Spitz's case study *Hospitalization* documents how babies raised in an impersonal foundling home that cared for infants in immaculate and hygienic conditions died or suffered retardation in an institutional environment devoid of human love and warmth (Suranski 1982).

Day care has different effects upon the mother-child relationship depending upon the nature of the mother's behavior toward her child before it leaves home. When mothers provide sensitive, responsive, affectionate care, the attachment between mother and child, which is already likely to be secure, is not typically hurt by day care. If a mother does not display these qualities, less than optimal day care increases the likelihood of an insecure relationship between mother and child (Broude 1996).

A number of studies have looked at mother's attitude toward children and children's attitude toward their mothers as a result of spending long hours in day care. A recent 7-year study is one carried out by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). The first report analyzed infants' attachment to their mothers at 15 months, later reports dealt with findings for 24 and 36 months. No significant attachment differences were found after the infant had been in day care for 15 months. At 36 months the changes were not large, but the direction of the change was constant. Children who spent more time in day care had weaker attachment to their mothers.

Amato and Booth (1997), who studied stability over the life course, found that particularly sons had higher levels of attainment when their mothers were employed part-time and the lowest level of attainment when their mothers were employed overtime, and that greater involvement of fathers in child care resulted in stronger affection between adult children and their fathers. What is happening at home and in the family appears to be a powerful predictor of both cognitive and parent-child interaction.

Day Care of Questionable Organization and Questionable Quality

In a study of data drawn from state child-care regulations as of July 1990 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Young, Marsland and Zigler (1997) found that no single state met the criterion for good quality, that is the highest standard, and only 17 states had regulations rated as Minimally Acceptable. Thirty states had regulations that rated as Poor and four states had no infant and toddler care regulations at all or rated as Very Poor.

Regarding number of children in a group, 37 states rated either Poor or Very Poor, indicating that they failed to regulate adequately staff-child ratios and group size. Not one state rated as Optimal for this domain. 28 states failed to regulate group size for either infants or toddlers.

Most states permitted infants and toddlers to be cared for by the staff who, on average, had not completed high school, had only some general training in child development or early childhood education, and received fewer than four hours of in-service training annually. Only 14 states met Minimally Acceptable standards for education and training of directors of child-care centers, meaning only a minority of the states required, at minimum, a high school degree, three college level courses in child development or early child education and to participate in 5-14 hours of in-service training per year.

Despite the low scores on size of groupings of children and qualifications of caretakers, the *programs* offered by 45 states provided developmentally appropriate programs of care for infants and toddlers. 28 states rated Good and one as Optimal. In contrast, six states had regulations that failed to meet minimally acceptable standards for program guidelines. *To establish a healthy bond with their caregivers, very young children need warm, stimulating and individualized nurturance from adults who are knowledgeable about children's growth and development and who stay on the job long enough to establish a consistent relationship* (Young, Marsland, and Zeigler 1997).

Workers in day care are harried with overwork. The recommended number of infants that should be cared for by one

day care worker is three. On the average, one or two caregivers may have responsibility for eight or as many as 16 infants and/or toddlers each day. They are, by necessity, less sensitive to the children's needs and desires. Children are often required to go through 15 or more transitions or changes of activity each day. The way in which caregivers manage these activities, routines, and transitions often reveal an absence of flexibility, intersubjectivity, and spontaneity. In field notes made in a center and reported by Leavitt (1991), scheduled routines were given primacy over the children's inclinations; their understanding and expressions of their own feelings of fatigue, hunger, and energy were denied and subordinated to adult-imposed schedules. For instance, during lunch time the toddlers were tired. One day a child started to droop into slumber at the table. He was aroused and encouraged to eat, said the adult, "It's not time to sleep yet." When this was not enough to waken the child, his chair was jostled in an attempt to awaken him. When that didn't work, the child was removed from the chair and stood up in another attempt to awaken him. On another occasion, one little boy was falling asleep the minute he sat down for lunch. The care giver tried to get him to stay awake and eat, but he responded by crying. After only a minute of crying, he started to fall asleep again, food in his mouth. At this point one of the care givers tried to get him to stand up, but his legs just folded underneath him. She sat him back on his chair. Before anyone had time to prevent it, the little boy fell out of his chair. He was awake now. Harried workers are more likely to rely on contain and control techniques such as compulsory naps, medication, time out and restraint (Daly and Dowd 1992). In cases of poor care, problems range from safety hazards to unresponsive caregivers, to a lack of toys. If a caregiver spoons food from one bowl into the mouths of a number of toddlers the health of the toddlers can be at risk (Collins 1997).

Most states permit infants and toddlers to be cared for by staff who, on average, have not completed high school, have only general training in child development or early childhood education. The best child-care workers love children, are skilled listeners, have

good values, good social skills, high energy, good judgment and know how to teach. In short, they have the skills that good parents are expected to have (Stevens 1997; Daly and Dowd 1992). And quality care pays off. The higher the quality of child care in the first three years of life, the more school readiness the child demonstrates by age 3 (NIH News Alert 1997). Children in high-quality day care are compliant and have teachers who are more involved and invested in child compliance (Howes and Olenick 1986). Quality care does not depend on caregivers alone, but also depends on parental involvement, that is, a day care staff and the child in partnership with parents, communicating about their children frequently, openly, and in two-way communication (Stevens 1997). The number of months spent in full-time center care is particularly related to the number of friends and extracurricular activities of the children. In addition, more time in the center is positively related to parent's rating of the children's emotional well-being, leadership, popularity, attractiveness, and assertiveness and negatively related to aggressivity. In addition, children with more time in high-quality day care show more physical affection during peer interaction, are more often assigned to the gifted program and receive higher math grades (Field 1991). The quality of the child's environment in child care plays an important role in cognitive and language development as early as one year of age. Age of entry into child care is related to infant development (Burchinal et al. 1996).

Today's American family bears the full cost of raising and educating its offspring with the help of day care. For the family, the value of childhood is in the affective sphere, whereas for society as a whole the economic importance of childhood remains unaltered (Sgiitta 1994). The gratification it gives children is the acquisition of skills that will be useful for the economy in the distant future.

Switching contexts—from family, to day care, and back to family again—demands flexible mastery of different social codes and flexible differential exposure of aspects of the self. The child has to adjust to very different kinds of interacting groups. The quality day care center is a custom-designed environment that is

“child-friendly,” but a child’s “selfishness” and regression are largely forbidden in the day care center. There is an astonishingly small amount of display of emotion in the everyday life of the public day nursery. In the home, the child’s private world, people’s interaction is governed to a large extent by the emotional relations prevailing between the individuals concerned. In day care, the child’s public world, dispassionate behavior is uppermost, while the affective aspects of the interaction are kept in check. *It is as if different kinds of logic of social interaction were valid in the different groups – public day care centers and private family, between which the child is a commuter.*

If mothers and fathers are out working, how the children will fare under an out-of-home system of child care will largely depend on the quality of child care offered. Forty percent of day care centers for infants and toddlers gave less than minimal standard care (Collins 1997). Another study estimates that only around 25 percent of infants and children are in a formal day care center reserved for that purpose (Broude 1996). The quality of much of infant-center care is poor to minimally adequate. *Working Mother Magazine* in its fifth annual study of day care, looking at slightly different factors, reports that ten states had high ratings, but no state received the magazine’s highest rating of five on a scale of one to five in any of the categories. Quality was judged by the number of children each adult cared for, group size, and care givers’ training. Measures of safety included state immunization laws, inspections, quality of playground surfaces and hand-washing requirements. Child care was found to be “wholly inadequate and quality lacking in far too many programs.” In three states child care was judged to be dismal, receiving a rating of one out of five. Low wages paid to day care workers prevented many educated people from being attracted to the jobs. Low wages also led to high turn over (Neuzil 1997).

Licensed or Registered Day Care Centers

A quality day care center is usually registered, licensed or accredited; supervised by a teacher or teachers, professionally

trained in child development; with an adequate staff of members trained in early childhood development; with the recommended number of children per staff member--either three to four infants, four to six toddlers, seven to ten preschoolers, eight to 12 under six, ten to 15 six and older—with sufficient room; sufficient and appropriate toys for children of their age; art and other materials; and some time when children are free to make choices at least part of the day, that is, a schedule that is not rigid (Holcomb, et al. 1996).

Some of the things one would expect to find in a quality care facility include training of the staff, ratio of staff to children, and characteristics of staff members. Children benefit when caregivers are trained in child development. A center that has a philosophy toward staff development is important. A climate that supports staff professional development not only boosts the quality of care for children, it also increases staff morale and reduces staff turnover. Shortage of staff turnover is critical in ensuring stability for children (Stevens 1997). The infant-care provider must have a working knowledge of child development; caregivers must also be able to read and interpret the many signals emitted by babies—infant vocalization, facial expressions and body language all serve as need indicators (Watkins and Durant 1987).

The United States, when viewed from the perspective of Western European industrial countries and particularly the Nordic countries, is behind in meeting quality day care needs of children (Wolfe 1989). Most of the continental Europeans provide for children from ages 3 to 5 or younger. Such arrangements are used by practically all eligible children as soon as there is space. Coverage ranges from 50 percent to 95 percent of those aged 3 to 5 and is rapidly reaching the higher figure. There is still a debate over policy on the continent related to those under age 3. The countries display a range of provisions from an emphasis on social welfare to care for children at home. There are countries that consider other alternatives like a shortened work week for parents of younger children as in Norway and Sweden. Denmark has a

nationwide child-care system of generally high quality for all children (Sommers and Langsted 1994).

Twenty-Four-Hour Day Care

There is also a growing need for *twenty-four-hour child care*, or around-the-clock care for working parents of young children (Cummins 1997). This is not a program that is regarded as a “child-friendly” program, nor is it “mother-friendly.” It results mainly from the national welfare-to-work policy which is sending mostly poor mothers to jobs and their children into care. It could be called a “government-friendly” care program. It is yet too soon to know if the child-care system will be able to respond to the pressing need. Minnesota is the first state to let low-income parents use their child-care subsidy to stay at home with a baby.

Preschool and Head Start

Preschool is a form of out-of-home care of children three or four years of age. It does not rate much higher than does the average day care. A recent report by the Carnegie Corporation concluded that the skills taught in quality preschools are important to a child’s future education. Quality preschools are particularly advantageous for parents who place them in such a preschool. Nevertheless, fewer than 25 percent of U.S. preschools are satisfactory. Georgia schools provide free preschool for all 4-year-olds, regardless of income status. This is the first state to do so; pre-kindergarten programs exist in many states but generally are limited to poor children or those with special needs.

The Carnegie report rated as mediocre nearly two-thirds of the 400 preschools they visited; on the other hand, many parents could prepare their children at home with excellent results (Diamond 1998; Seal 1998).

We cannot seize our consideration of preschool as a form of out-of-home child care without looking at the *Head Start* program. Head Start got its start in the 1960s, a period of high hopes. It appeared that we would, and we could, achieve the ideal of a democratic society, a period of unprecedented educational

achievement and economic prosperity for many, if not all, Americans. We believed that it was only a matter of time until all children, regardless of color or economic circumstances, would have access to quality education (Horowitz, 1994).

The most important factor affecting how young children were perceived and treated in America was the creation and rapid expansion of the Head Start program as part of President Johnson's Administration's War on Poverty. It was started as an 8-week summer program in 1965. The next year Head Start services were offered on a year-round basis, and by 1972 almost all the programs were offered on a year-long basis. Head Start was envisioned by its founders as providing a wide variety of services, such as educational, health, nutrition, social and psychological assistance. Head Start represented an attempt to improve compensatory experiences to impoverished and minority children who were perceived to be educationally disadvantaged compared to their more affluent counterparts. The idea of the project was to give poor and ghetto-dwelling preschool-aged children the supplementary education that would prepare them to compete in public school with the more environmentally advanced. Ultimately, the aim was to interrupt the cycle of poverty at the lower-age level. Head Start programs were not designed to provide child care for children of employed mothers. Until 1990, the most extensive program for assisting families with child care was the Federal Child and Dependency Care Tax Credit, which reimbursed families with one or two working parents for 20 percent to 30 percent of their child-care expenses. But many of those who heard about Head Start were working-class minority parents who wanted to ensure their children access to such essential opportunities. Parents increasingly sought early educational experiences for their children, not by leaving them with relatives, but by enrolling them in Head Start. They needed high quality early childhood education programs at fees they could afford.

Head Start will, with new funding, continue to expand. Even though health care is supposed to be indicated, fewer than half of

children enrolled were fully immunized and health care rated only adequate or poor.

Head Start experienced a serious set-back in 1969 with the release of the Westinghouse Learning Corporation Report and Ohio University Explanation. The report stated that although Head Start did increase the I.Q. scores of at-risk children temporarily, that gain was lost once the children entered the regular school (Vinvoskis 1996). It is true that the studies do suggest that Head Start students do get an extra edge but lose it in a year or two after leaving the program. Defenders say it may be because on leaving Head Start the children go into some of the nation's worst schools. Preschool appears to help poor children behave more competently over time even though their I.Q. remains the same. The question is how children can be encouraged to use fully the intelligence they possess. Head Start has been highly successful in improving the physical well-being and school readiness of poor children by providing health, educational, mental health, and family support services and opportunities for parental involvement (Zlegler 1995). Although part-day programs still predominate in a growing number of school districts, pre-kindergarten and nursery schools are extending programs to a full day to achieve child development objectives while meeting the care needs of working parents (Kamerman and Kahn 1995). *We are experiencing considerable change in how we perceive and treat young children. A much greater emphasis is placed on early education, and some public school systems are now opening their doors to all 4-year-olds rather than just to those enrolled in special programs like Head Start* (Juster 1987).

The broad popularity of the Head Start program among parents of disadvantaged children ensures the program's survival, but still not its full extension to cover all disadvantaged children. Perhaps it is ironic that questions about the efficiency of Head Start continue to be raised since policy makers and the public are more enthusiastic about the program than ever before. Politicians in both parties are vying with each other to express their support for the Head Start program (Vinvoskis 1996). Both the federal

government and the states have programs specifically aimed at helping the development of infants and toddlers, although as social policy they are nowhere near as sweeping as an overhaul of welfare. The most notable federal initiative is Early Head Start which was created in 1994 when Congress reauthorized funding for Head Start (Collins 1997).

In 1996 the budget for Early Head Start was \$146 million, and awards were granted to 143 sites. The money is used to provide a variety of services to poor families with children under the age of 4 and to poor pregnant women. Some communities are experimenting with family intervention that include grandparents; others are trying to address the special health needs of newborns or to provide extra help to the parents with a history of drug abuse.

School-Age Care

There are some parents who make no arrangements for the care of their children of school age even when both parents are at work. During the summer months, almost 13 percent of school-aged children are unwatched, left to fend for themselves (Barry 1993). Also, Census Bureau data suggests that nearly 5 million children are home alone most afternoons each day of the week. Parents of 24 million children of all ages are not at home when their children return from school. Yet *school-age care programs* are “exploding” in number and in states across the country. America is primarily a society for adults; uncared for children—street children and others—disrupt the tranquillity, stability and normalcy of adult society (Beers 1996).

One group in need of additional day care spots is the younger elementary school child (Vandell and Corasaniti 1998). This youngster is usually over six years old and under age 12. A growing number of children, perhaps as many as 15 million, fall into this category and there appears to be no simple solution. Many of the nation’s school systems have become involved in providing before-and after-school care. Many after-school or extended day programs are based in schools, some are community run, others are staffed

and managed by a sponsoring school district. If a child continues to attend a day care center where he or she received preschool services, this sort of after-school program can provide essential security as the child moves from one learning situation to another (Watkins and Durrant 1987). Sometimes school children receive a snack and are supervised during the remainder of the afternoon until the parents arrive back from work. Some providers also care for school-aged children during the summer when full-time care is again required. But before and after school care programs are not available in all districts and they do not meet all the needs of the children of working parents.

Rosenthal and Vandell (1996) investigated children's experiences in 30 school-aged care programs. They found that negative staff-child interactions were more frequent when there were large numbers of children per staff member and when staff had less formal education. A greater number of different types of program activities were associated with more frequent positive interaction and when programs were rated as flexible and age-appropriate. Children had more positive program perceptions when offered a great variety of activities.

Au Pair or Nanny

One way to deal with the problem of providing day care for the children of working parents is to employ an *au pair* or *nanny*. Day care centers have struggled to overcome the stigma of having been originated as care for poor children. Therefore, hiring a caregiver to care for one's children in one's home has obvious appeal for busy, affluent parents trying to reconcile the demands of family life with their careers. They may feel the stigma of a care center; there is prestige in providing care in the home. An *au pair* is usually a girl from abroad who comes to America to do domestic work for the family in return for room and board and the opportunity to practice the family's language. She has no particular training for the job and is expected to work no more than a maximum of 25 hours per week. A *nanny*, on the other hand, is a child's nursemaid and is expected to have some training, though the amount and kind may

vary. One American placement agency does what it considers to be a thorough background check of the girl, including criminal background, fingerprint check, driving and credit record check, and personal interview. Nannies they place must have child-care experience and child-care references, although baby-sitting or teaching Sunday school can count as child-care experience! Nannies from a British agency, on the other hand, receive two years' training, full-time, before they receive a diploma. A third of the time is spent in a hospital nursery or private home; two thirds is in a classroom.

In a 1991 survey, over 40 percent of parents with family incomes over \$75,000 reported that they hired a caretaker to look after their children. Wages were \$350-450 a week for full-time live-out nannies and \$250-350 for live-in nannies. Many au pairs come to the United States but trained nannies from abroad are rare because of restrictive immigration laws.

Parents with in-home care still have trouble controlling the quality of care or even knowing how good the care is. Parents are reluctant to engage an au pair to care for young children because of the negative publicity received by an untrained au pair from abroad.¹ The events of the case of the au pair forced parents to reflect on what they considered acceptable child-care arrangements for their children.

For the au pair the situation can be painful as well. First, she is not related to the child or to the parents and caring for a child is likely not her primary motivation for coming to America. She is from abroad and is likely seeking adventure in an unfamiliar environment. She also lacks social support. It is hard to imagine a more socially-isolated individual (Loftus 1997; Palmer 1997; Zeifman 1997). Many parents observe concrete differences in how they and their employees treat children. As with issues of control, it is the parents with the most egalitarian ideologies that can end

¹ This refers to the case of 19-year-old Louise Woodward, an au pair from England charged with murdering 8-month-old Matthew Eappen, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in early 1997.—Editor, Books Reborn.

up the most conflicted. These middle-class Americans with jobs operate with some authority and independence, encourage young children early on to develop their own tastes and opinions. Few of them are interested in structured academic learning for their preschool children. They want their children to be in rich environments where they learn naturally and informally. Beneath a seemingly relaxed child-rearing life-style, they hope to prepare children emotionally and intellectually for the decades of schooling that lie ahead of them.

Many caregivers work outside the sphere of government regulations and are not subject to them. They operate as they do outside the regulatory system because they either are exempt from regulations or choose not to become regulated. Parents have slowly discovered that under-the-table payments, derivatives, and illegal aliens hired as caregivers can no longer be claimed. The caregiver may have no Social Security number and not want to be reported. At the end of 1991, some nannies worked 60-hour weeks for less than \$80 per week, including room and board, but most made between \$100 and \$500 weekly. Many affluent families handle child-care problems by hiring experienced nannies. Placement services have become a growing industry in the last decade, with more than 800 nanny employment agencies operating across the country, which shows their popularity (Barry 1993). Two out of every three nannies leave their jobs each year, giving the job the highest turnover rate of any predominantly female occupation. Day care teachers, like au pairs and nannies, are poorly paid, but they stand above care giving in salary, security, and training. They are not personal servants but independently employed professionals. They can organize their time and social life as they see fit (Zinsser 1991). A move toward a system of good child care indicates that private child-care solutions cannot easily solve social problems (Wrigley 1995).

The federal government has never taken a clear direction in its pursuit of child-care policies and programs. Many Americans are uncertain about what role, if any, government should play in

fostering children's health and development and in helping parents manage their child-rearing responsibilities (National Commission on Children 1991a). Governmental benefits in the United States often are viewed as an intrusion into families, or a step toward socialism; in Europe they are considered an investment in the future stability and well-being of a nation (Popfensberger 1996). Americans have not been particularly committed to supporting children as a group with growing needs, through government.

With the emerging mobilization of men and women required in World War II day care seemed to come into its own, and prejudice against the working mother gave way to the exigencies of the war effort. Public day nurseries and nursing schools had declined before World War II, indicating that local schools lacked a sense of vested interest or responsibility for school or preschool children. During the war came the first example of government interest in child care, or really government-industry collaboration. By July 1945, more than 1½ million children were in day care (Suranski 1982). What warranted a government response was that, with female employment, a large number of children would be neglected. Yet, the government child-care policy that did emerge was generally incoherent, fragmented, and based upon the assumption that public-supported child care and female employment were only a temporary necessity, strictly a war-time necessity. It was thought that, by the end of the war, women would return to the home and take up where they left off in child care and supervision. But the government was wrong. A broad survey of 13,000 women conducted by the Women's Bureau in 1944-45 found that 75 percent of women intended to keep on working after the war ended. It had been estimated that as many as 80 percent of women working during the war would continue to do so immediately afterwards, although most of them lost their good-paying jobs and were pushed into low-paid service jobs and traditional female work (Auerbach 1988).

A lack of cohesion with regard to promises and goals characterize the federal government's inability to extend public

involvement in the 1960s and 1970s when other government programs were expanded. Child care had been provided by government to certain families only when it was linked to large social programs of unemployment, disadvantage, or disaster. Child care had not been considered appropriate or necessary for the majority of “normal” middle-class families. While there appears to be a shift toward greater public acceptance of child care for anyone who desires it, the stigma of government programs remains. As the number of women in the work force expanded, the necessity for day care increased greatly, but no national day care program was implemented.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a number of proposals for public child-care programs were made at different levels of government, but few were adopted. The most significant of these proposals was the 1971 Comprehensive Child Act, and attempt to legitimize public involvement and federal money in child care (Auerbach 1988).

Programs for older Americans, on the other hand, are national programs that avoid the dramatic state-by-state variations that characterize children’s programs. Clearly, *government economic support for older people has been improving, compared with support for children and their families during the early stages of this aging society.* We can expect the trend to continue as the percentage of older people increases and as the increase in their plight becomes a greater issue for the middle-aged. This is particularly alarming because children’s needs for public support will be increasing into the 21st century. A higher percentage of children will be living in single-parent families and an increasing percentage of children will live in poverty. The trend toward an increasing percentage of poor children who are in female-headed and minority families suggests that *in the coming years children will require increased public economic support*—in addition to the support they now require for academic and locational education, protection from harm, preventive health care, and assistance to the chronically ill and emotionally disturbed.

Several strategies might be considered for improving support and services for children and their families. Perhaps the most obvious strategy is to strengthen organized advocacy efforts on behalf of children. Adults must cope with the inherent political weaknesses of a voteless constituency—children. Older people cannot be counted on as allies, though they represent greater potential political strength, and have organization capacities for advocacy (Richmond and Stagner 1986). For the last couple of years, the debate on child care has been focused on returning the responsibility to the states. If one lives in a prosperous and progressive state, state responsibility can be advantageous. Nevertheless, *we continue to treat child care largely as if it were non-professional baby-sitting or as if no adults were responsible for their care* (Culbreth 1996).

Chapter 7

*Advantages and Disadvantages
of Out-of-Home Child Care*

For parents who are considering placing a child in some form of day care—first, the advantages. The United States is awakening from a long period of mass apathy regarding children and their needs. The lack of success in the treatment of children is coming to be regarded as a national problem. Traditionally, the United States has left children to the care of their parents, paying little attention to what goes on in the home, or, for that matter, what goes on outside the home.

Why this new concern for children? *The nation has come to recognize its dependence less and less on natural resources for its global economic success and more and more on human power, or brain power.* According to neuroscience, the brain undergoes a series of extraordinary connections, or synapses, that are seldom or never used if they are not stimulated. Deprived of a stimulating environment, a child's brain suffers. Children who are not stimulated, rarely touched, or who don't play much develop brains 20 to 30 percent smaller than that normal for their age. An environment rich in experience—in language, for instance, produces rich brains. This discovery is one of the reasons for the passion in this debate over quality child care and early childhood education. There is urgent need, say child-development experts, for day care and preschool programs designed to boost the brain power of youngsters born into impoverished households, in fact, for children in all households. "Babies who are not talked to do not learn to speak or understand language, and those who do not form an emotional attachment to some adult... seem prone to language disorders" (Grady 1998:F3).

There is little question but that a good day care center—licensed, registered, with trained, sensitive care givers—is better

for a child than is staying at home, full-time, with a poorly educated mother, living in poverty, who has to work and who cannot afford day care. The problem is, there are not many qualified day care centers, and, though educational levels have increased substantially throughout much of the century, there are still too many mothers who never finished high school, cannot afford day care, and who are raising children that give evidence of resulting mental retardation. About one half of the excess of mild mental retardation is found related to a disproportionately high burden of adverse socioeconomic risk factors among mothers, such as low education and residence in neighborhoods with low median family income; and low maternal education—less than 12 years—is indicated as the strongest risk factor. *Mothers with less than 12 years of schooling at the time their children are born are four times more likely to have their children designated as mildly retarded by age 10 years than are mothers with 13 or more years of education.* A large proportion of mild mental retardation is potentially preventable (Satcher 1995).

Are we in danger of giving up on the family as a primary child-rearing institution in favor of day care? It is not clear that the present situation of home care needs a new approach for all families; it is neither universally accepted nor even understood that children in day care are better off. The mother-care tradition persists because we are acculturated to accept it and because it reinforces existing power arrangements (Barry 1993). Historically, we would rather put our trust in the home as the primary child-rearing institution. *It may be that the problems of day care are no greater than the preexisting ones with home care, but they appear to be greater because they are out in the open and obvious and because they are unfamiliar.* We have not successfully dealt with this problem (Hechseher 1984).

Let us review some of the situations in families where day care is *needed by the children*. There are a number of situations in which the family is in a state of disrepair so that out-of-home child care can be given high priority. A quality, well-financed day care center is often more durable than never-complete or broken

families, and durability is of the essence in child care. First are the homes that contribute to mild mental retardation in children. These are most critical. Second, there are many families that were never completely formed—single-parent families, for instance. Single-parenthood, while it may represent personal liberation for adults, is generally considered to be unstable for children and for society (Berg 1987) and may require that the lone parent work to support his/herself and the child. Third, the divorce rate has more than doubled and has remained higher than any other Western country. Besides the loss of a parent through divorce, children living with a divorced parent are four times more likely to be poor, often necessitating that the parent at home work outside the home. Fourth, families are smaller than they were at one time, meaning that benefits are divided among a smaller number of siblings, which is good, but there are also fewer siblings to associate with and in more and more homes both father and mother work outside the home either by choice or out of necessity, leaving an empty nest so far as child care is concerned. Someone must step in to help prevent chaos, though society has been slow to offer help. Fifth, it is generally agreed that for children over two years of age and with no siblings remaining in the home, no child should be exclusively reared by adults no matter how child-centered they may be. It is difficult to imagine social adaptation developing in children who lack involvement with other children (Weill 1942; Mandell 1986). From age 2 and on they should spend a great portion of their play time with children of their own age or children a little older or a little younger. Play is their means of getting acquainted and adjusting to their surroundings. Coleman proposes aiming children toward achievement orientation; he argues in favor of exposing underachieving children to the beneficial affects of daily contact with privileged, higher-achieving children (Medrich, et al. 1982).

It is also important that a youngster develop friendships with other children. Day care experience may be important to finding friends and other social relations, particularly when children live isolated from playmates in the community. Children come to

realize that friendships are fragile and that acceptance into ongoing activity is often difficult. Developing stable relationships with several playmates is a way of ensuring successful entry into group play. Children rarely engage in solitary play; they consistently try to gain entry to ongoing peer activity. Playing with other children is the process by which children learn to understand and to act on their environment.

A child begins life as a social being with a social network, in interaction with others he constructs a social world. Children use their developing skills and knowledge to create and maintain social order in their life worlds (Corsaro 1985). They often begin in day care as anti-social, loud, confused and non-cooperative, deeply concerned with age and physical size. The primary distinguishing characteristics between the children in day care is that another child is bigger and must be deferred to. Although age represents many things, with children's groups it is often an important symbol of status and power. The meaning of age within children's groups is best understood as a language of social control (Passuth 1987).

One of the goals of a quality day care center staffed by professionals is to discover individuality in the child and to develop a well-rounded personality. It is assumed that early inquisitiveness leads to future adult interests (Passuth 1985). The typical modern child in day care meets its living conditions as a sensitive individual. In a group setting a child must develop resistance, resilience, and vigor in order to get along (Corsaro 1985). Corsaro noted this sensitivity in children he studied. He matched the children's reaction to the injury of one of their classmates. In every instance, the children within sight or hearing of the injury stopped what they were doing and closely watched what was going on with the distressed child until an adult stepped in to help.

Formal day care programs are also associated with better grades in reading and math and better work habits (Posner and Vandell 1994). An assessment of 150 two-to-four-year-olds in six child-care arrangements revealed that the social and intellectual

development of children in centers (part-time or full-time) was advanced over that of children in home care (with mother, a sitter, or day care home providers). According to Clarke-Stewart (1991), the most likely causes of the difference in children's development was educational lessons, opportunities to practice skills and follow rules with a variety of peers and non-parental adults, and the encouragement of independence by teachers.

A positive way of looking at day care is to see it as part of the "humanization of childhood." There is a communal sharing of societal activities with peers when change is so rapid and constant, flexibility is an absolute necessity. Resilient children find a great deal of emotional support outside their immediate family (Wemer 1989).

The more experiences children have, the more ability to integrate different experiences into a coherent and comprehensive whole (Deneik 1989). The peer group is a place where children learn equalitarian behavior. Perhaps equally important is their socialization to their groups age-status hierarchy. Children make elaborate and complex age and status distinctions in their groups; moreover, inequality may be as important a feature as a quality in children's groups (Passuth 1987). Sherman studied what he called "group glee" in nursery schools. Sherman found that group glee involved laughter, screams, giggles, and jumping up and down, often during teacher-directed activities or meeting times but it also emerged in peer activity (Corsaro 1985).

Children placed in day care are typically more adapt at interacting with other people and knowing what to expect from them, and this shows up in the sophistication of their social behavior and the relative ease with which they approach people (Broude 1996).

Personal competencies which will be demanded in the course of their societal development are: self-assertion, ability to communicate and articulate wishes and opinions effectively; ability to exercise self-control; the ability to take initiative and to promote oneself (Dencik 1989). A child's attendance at a day care center staffed by conscientious and nurturing adults during the

first two and a half years of life does not seem to produce a psychological profile very much different from the one created for children reared totally in the home (Kagan, Kearsley and Zelazo 1978).

The success of youngsters seems directly related to how well parents and others are able to provide safe niches for them. Children in a carefully-run day care take no risks. Yet, children's ability to think up or create danger seems almost limitless. The danger is not the result of reckless behavior, for the children's main tactic for coping with the dangers they think up is not confronting the danger but evading it, as Corsaro (1985) found. The children do not rescue one another, rather they cooperatively escape the danger. Danger comes, it is asserted, and it disappears bringing a shared display of relief and joy. Much of the children's play outside consists of running and chasing routines. Apparent victims were really not afraid and attackers were really not frightening.

Now for some of the disadvantages of out-of-home child care. One of the most glaring disadvantages is the inadequacy of many care facilities that are custodial and jeopardize young children's health, safety and development. Such centers have been classified as "no more than warehouses for the storage of children" (Heckscher 1984). A University of Colorado Public Report is highly critical of most center-based child care. Only one in seven centers provide a level of child care that promotes healthy development and learning and only 14 percent provide acceptable care (Fox 1996). Many studies cited earlier in this study support this view. Many places used for day care are built for other purposes—a large house, an abandoned school space, a church basement. Places which are not adequately lighted, resourced, cleaned or heated are used as day care facilities.

Parents determine that their child shall be placed in day care. Shades of adulthood begin early for the children. Day care children run into "time controllers," and these time controllers also invade family life. Children must get up at the right time, get dressed in time, finish breakfast in time, be ready to catch the bus or get in

the car on time. The time controllers make children do what they would not otherwise do, and not in such a hurry, and perhaps not in that order. In the day care center they are told when it is nap time, when to eat, when to line-up, be silent, sit, wait. For the child the experiences of childhood as a carefree, disorganized life made up of the things of the child's own choosing comes to an end. There is a danger that the increasingly time-tabled life of children ends the informal community knowledge replaced by the formal learning opportunities structured by adults (Conally and Ennew 1996).

The most critical factor is regimentation; a lack of individualization, a rigid system, and the authoritarian role of the care giver (Kovorik 1994). The care giver literally takes over and directs the children's lives. Children are "relieved" of the necessity of thinking and planning their day. This is based on two suppositions: that children do not know how to manage their time and they are not as good as adults in following a task to completion. There appears to be an optimal level of activity a child should achieve—too little and the child risks isolation, too much and the child becomes over-committed (Passuth 1985). The professional, who knows the ins-and-outs of child development, takes over.

A non-family member who makes a career of caring for children has a right to expect some economic advantage from doing so, other than the emotional satisfaction of caring for other person's children. She can perhaps enhance her chances for improving her salary by long-term dedicated service or by enhancing her professional competence through attaining a professional degree. The turnover rate for staff is high, indicating that care does not compete well with the salaries of other occupations, hence the turnover of staff. Turnover of staff makes placement of infants and children particularly undesirable.

What are children like after spending long periods in day care? It is difficult to say, and it depends in part on one's perspective. They are of many kinds. Broude (1996) highlights some of what are perhaps the worst characteristics of day care children. She recognizes that children are typically smarter about

how to interact with other people and what to expect from them, and thus show up in the sophistication of their social behavior and the relative ease with which they approach people. But she claims they are also more likely than home-reared children to display bouts of behavior bordering on the anti-social. In short, there appears to be a social downside to day care. Children who have attended day care are frequently described as competitive and aggressive with their peers in comparison with their home-raised children. One study found that youngsters enrolled in day care at an early age were more likely to push, kick, hit, threaten, curse, and fight with other children. Day care children are more prone to be disobedient, demanding, bossy, bratty, boisterous, irritable, rebellious, impolite, and less compliant in response to the demands of care givers (Broude, 1996). It is possible that they are a generation prepared to assert themselves in the potency-acquiring culture in which they are growing up (Dencik, 1989). In societies with schools where children spend extended periods of time segregated into age groups, there is a high proportion of dominance, struggles and competitiveness; with day care, they start their competitiveness earlier (Whiting and Edwards 1988).

There appears to be a universal tendency for children to react to the size of their companions. Young children are concerned about physical size. When older or larger children interact with younger or smaller children, there is a comparatively high proportion of attempts by the former to dominate (Whiting and Edwards, 1988). Even when a teacher attempts to downplay competition between children, they find it very difficult. A sense of failure undermines the self-esteem of many of the younger ones (Corsaro, 1985).

The Scandinavian countries have had long experience with placing children in day care. Yet, Waerness (1984) states that there is still a "raging controversy" both among experts and lay people as to whether or not placement of infants in child care settings is detrimental to their development (Lally, 1995). Danish mothers approve of a half-day arrangement. The Danish National Institute of Social Research has for many decades asked a representative sample of mothers of young children about their attitudes toward

day care. Eighty percent of the mothers of children 0-6 years of age prefer arrangements whereby the mother is employed in part-time work and the child is in day care for half the day (Sommers and Langsted 1994).

There is also the danger of disease. Children, especially infants and toddlers, are susceptible to diseases of various kinds when they are congregated in groups for extended periods. They encounter more flu, rashes, colds, whooping cough, gastroenteritis, twice the risk of ear infection, strep throat, hepatitis B, and spinal meningitis than children who do not attend day care (Broude 1996). Children with chronic otitis media (middle-ear disease) in early life may be at risk of developing less than optimal social behavior during the first three years of life. They may display initial developmental delay in language development and become socially withdrawn as compared to other children (Vemon-Feagans and Manlose 1996).

The Charlotte Riley Child Center on Purdue's Calumet Campus reduced the danger of disease in a day care center to an alarming degree using simple hygienic methods. They introduced a program of frequent hand-washing, germ medication, teaching children to cough into their elbows and to wash after coughing or sneezing, and encouraging the parent to follow the same practices at home. Since some children mouth toys, the staff washed toys thoroughly at regular intervals. By the day care staff and others around them following such practices, they were able to decrease by as much as fifty percent the development of colds, flu and diarrhea among the children (Slout 1997).

Another way to control the timing of infections is to postpone entry into day care. Physicians indicate that it is easier on children to build immunity when they are closer to the kindergarten age before entering day care.

How old should children be before they are placed in day care for the first time? While they are babies or young toddlers, even the very best care seldom gives them anything they positively need. Also, other children count for little for a child below the age of two (Weill 1942). Play in day care all day every day often deprives them

of what they need from parents. Day care only comes into its own as first choice for children themselves toward the end of the toddler period when it begins to fulfill developmental needs for companionship and education from others (Leach 1994). The first three years of a child's life are crucial in the child's ability to learn; basic trust by an infant is necessary for healthy psychological development throughout life. The infant who learns through experience to trust, slowly builds, in his or her own mind, a positive internal working model (Fox 1996). Belsky quantified the risk in long-term day care, estimating that the danger point in day care is twenty hours per week for children under age one (Fox 1996).

A practical time concept makes it hard for young children to prepare for the break from home, and in turn, the break again from day care. Other breaks are difficult as well. Take the case of a 5-year-old boy who is usually not awake at 6 a.m. when his mother leaves for the workplace. But today he is already awake at 6 a.m., throws a tantrum, insisting that he does not want her to go to work today, a scene that Adelson (1997) says resonates with many mothers who work outside the home. Leaving-for-work time can be the worst time of the day when mother must leave a screaming child, demanding to know why she cannot stay home, behind. The strain on a mother is great; some find the strain becomes too heavy to bare and either give up their job or cut back on their hours. Tears remind her how complicated family life can be (Adelson 1997).

The professional care giver may have to relinquish person-to-person orientation in favor of professional and colleague orientation. Often because of staff turnover, part-time and voluntary staff, or extreme team-coverage approaches, an intense and secure link between care giver and child does not have a chance to form (Lally 1995). Professionals may imply that the least "glamorous" tasks of child care must be sorted out and handed over to the less-skilled workers, such tasks as diaper changes, feeding, and washing the children. The individual planning to make a career of care giving may well concentrate on growth-oriented care; the work that is most attractive to professionals.

It is not enough that a day care worker likes children, though it certainly helps. Yet personal attachment by a day care worker to a child has its price. It frequently means working more hours than one is paid for, and sometimes one has to do things that directly go contrary to the rules (Waerness 1984). Essential abilities and skills must be present, or be developed, that include planning children's daily progress and interpreting children's needs based upon levels of development and other indicators provided by the youngster (Watkins and Durant 1987). As staff are more carefully screened for education and child development, their expectations are better accouterments of the office, such as periodic vacations, routine coffee breaks, and regular working hours. Child care workers who are familiar with the stages of child development prove far more responsible than those who are unaware of such information. As children are increasingly cared for by trained, qualified teachers who can expect to draw some direct economic advantage from doing so, the nature and meaning of that care will be increasingly dominated by the need to manage the earning power of the care giver. The two mechanisms by which this is done are economics of scale, that is more children per minder, and the professionalization of child care under the aegis of theories of child development (Oldman 1994).

Even during the first weeks of life children regard care differently. The ability to make sense of a care-giver's sound, learned during the first two or three months of life, varies from baby to baby. It is very important for care givers to detect these individual differences because they are the basis of babies developing an interest in the world. Does a parent who places a child early, and for long periods in the day, find enough time to regularly hug, caress, stroke, and talk to a young child? It is a moot question. Societies have known for decades, certainly since the early research by Spitz, that maternal deprivation in infancy can cause developmental difficulties. At a recent meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, it was reported for the first time that the biochemical consequences of emotional neglect on the developing brain warps the brain's developing normal circuits so that they

produce too much or too little of the hormone that controls responses to stress, causing permanent changes in the way an infant behaves and responds to the world around it. Abnormally high levels of stress hormones have been observed in children raised as orphans in Romania in state-run wards, for instance. In a study of subjects from both working- and middle-class families, reported in 1978, Kagan, Kearsley and Zelazo found that day care subjects and home controls were equally likely to choose the mother as the target for solace and attentive nurturance when they were bored, tired, or afraid, and all the children preferred the mother to any other adult by a factor of seven. Because of high personal turnover and other failings, children who spend most of their day in institutions are deprived of the feeling of security created in a family and tend to become rootless (Heckscher 1984).

So there are advantages and disadvantages in day care. Most of the advantages are to be found in care in quality day care centers. The problem is that such centers are all too scarce. Secondly, children who benefit from day care tend to be older; to be toddlers or older. Thirdly, to cut down on disease, children should be older and/or the center must maintain immaculate health care standards. *Until the United States provides a country-wide supply of quality day care centers supervised by adequately trained and well-paid staff, day care cannot be recommended as the solution to the problem of care of children.*

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Policy Proposals

There are arrangements for the care of children that are preferable to out-of-home care as witnessed in most day care institutions in the United States today. A number of studies have shown that the majority of day cares do not contribute to the nurturance or development of infants; and since infants need to be breast-fed and cared for during the first year of life, infants and even toddlers under two years of age can only with difficulty be placed in a day care, even a quality day care. There is a growing consensus among child development experts that what matters most in the care of infants and toddlers is a close relationship with a caring adult. What then are couples and single parents to do if they must work outside the home to support themselves and their children? American parents do not have many choices. Putting a baby in day care, or having one parent stay at home to care for the child and thereby sacrifice a living wage, is hardly a choice. More than half of all parents turn an infant over to day care before they are six months old.

The state and federal government have not done their share to help families offset the cost of raising children. As a result, families must pick up the major share of the cost of child rearing, which averages about \$9,000 per child annually for a middle-income family.

One could assume that every American has a stake in the way in which the next generation of American citizens and American workers are raised; day care should no longer be regarded as a woman's issue, or even a parents' issue. America is not an impoverished nation, but the gap between the haves and the have-nots in our society continues to widen, and there are more impoverished families doing what they can to raise the next generation of children. Research shows that children in low-

income families suffer the most and enter school facing significant learning disadvantages.

Congress, on behalf of all the people, could take action, as it has done before. In the early 1980s, the General Accounting Office issued a report, coupled with a series of child-abuse allegations, leveled against the system of child care being employed by the military. Congress became aroused and took action. Hearings were held in 1989, and the Military Child Care Act was passed. That year there was about \$89 million in the military's child-care program; today the annual funding has reached \$273 million. The military care system has been hailed as a national model (Cottle 1998). Representing a wealthy nation, Congress could do as well for all families in need of child-care help, but *such action will come only if the citizens demand it.* Change will not come easily. The traditional American ideology holds that parents are responsible for their children; this is firmly established. It is uniquely American to feel that the state should not, and in fact cannot, care for children's basic needs. Solidly middle-class parents who are not in need plan their lives in such a way that someone else does not need to finance their children. This is not true in the industrial European countries where children, as *the responsibility of all*, are accepted as an investment in the future rather than as government interference in family life. There are a number of things that can be done to spread the cost of child care without threatening the American ideology of the sacrosanct family.

I. *A national program would avert the dramatic, tragic and state-by-state variations that characterize children's programs today.* We do have a precedent for a national program; the Social Security and Medicare Program for older people is a national program. A Carnegie Council on Children Report concluded that we have an inadequate, uncoordinated, and incomplete pattern of family support services for children today. The financial burden that parents bear in raising and educating a child eventually creates enormous wealth for the nation, but economic sacrifices for the family.

In a 1979 Carnegie Report, a family's income position is judged to be the single most powerful determinant of the opportunities open to families and to children. In 1997, 9.8 million workers, representing 6 percent of the work force, had two jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Stagnating wages and rising family expenses keep adults away from home, working overtime or working at two jobs while neglecting their children.

II. *Full employment for all Americans, with wages that sustain families, has to be the constant goal of our society.* Or have we given up the ideal of family child care as no longer feasible? A federal child-care program would be largely unnecessary if a family income position were adequate for all. Good jobs, a living wage, and family-sustaining income would obviate the necessity of government "hand-outs" to help care for and educate children.

III. *If the United States changed its spending priorities and invested roughly 1 percent of GDP (Growth Domestic Product) on child care, or if it extended its percentage of GDP to approach the approximately 3 percent of GDP that the Nordic spend on child care, we would be on the way to a general child policy without attracting the parents of young children back into the labor force.*

IV. Economists prefer a *program of earned income tax credit (EITC)* as a way of combating poverty for the *poorest* families. The EITC has had a dramatic effect in lifting Americans out of poverty, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Nevertheless, there has been little legislative enthusiasm for expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit. Instead there is congressional effort to lower, or even eliminate it, for the working poor.

If government is unwilling, or unable, to eliminate poverty, it might at least take steps to [V] *maintain the quality of higher education* and make it accessible to a diverse group of citizens, thereby helping children. There is evidence suggesting that an increase in parental education, in the long run, benefits children. Children born of poor and not-well-educated mothers, of all races, are more likely than other children to be mildly retarded, placing them at disadvantage in benefiting from schooling. The level of

education parents receive influences their children's ultimate educational attainment.

VI. Another method of helping children of poorly-educated parents is the *Early Head Start Program* created in 1994. It was an outgrowth of the main Head Start Program, which serves mainly 3- and 4-year-old children. Early Head Start offers prenatal care to expectant mothers and care of children from birth to age 3. A major drawback with the program is that it still leaves about 7 million children without help (Cottle 1998).

VII. *Directly improving the economic status of children* would be preferable. Be that as it may, there is a clear trend in the United States for a worsening situation for children in the last two decades. The deterioration in the level of living of children has been significantly greater than for any other population group. The Census Bureau reported that nearly 10 million children had no health insurance in 1995. Children are a dependent population, like the elderly, in need of a support program such as Social Security and Medicare which have taken the elderly from a position of poverty to a position that gives the semblance of decency. And it is a national program, not a piece-meal program, such as that serving children, a population of definite worth to America's future. The elderly, once the poorest Americans, are now the least likely to live in poverty, thanks to Social Security and Medicare. We have shown no willingness to date to change the distribution mechanism of the economic market.

We must be clear about the status of the elderly, however. While they are the least likely to fall into poverty, once they are there, they are as likely as children to remain poor because they rely on fixed incomes which are not likely to go up. If we are prepared, as the former President Clinton proposed, to put a \$43 to \$63 billion budget surplus into shoring up Social Security for seniors, we should be able to find a way to make an equivalent investment in children.

VIII. *Parental leaves* are another way of making it possible for one parent to stay at home with a newborn child. It is a method used in European countries but only recently introduced in the

United States. About 70 percent of American women say they wish it was possible for them to care full-time for their very young children. Many of them would likely approve of the parental-leave system permitting someone to stay home and care for a baby. Sweden, for instance, passed a bill calling for 6 months' reimbursement at about 90 percent of taxable earnings. Consequent legislation raised the level, incrementally, to 7 months reimbursement in 1975, 9 months in 1978, 12 months in 1980, and 15 months in 1989. Legislation to extend leave to 18 months was passed in 1989, but was not implemented. At the birth of a child, Swedish parents can now share 40 leave days between them as they please; 360 are covered by an allowance which replaces about 90 percent of earnings. These leave days may be used until the child is 4 years old. On average, fathers take two months of this parental leave. The proportion of fathers who take this kind of leave has increased steadily since the option was introduced in 1974.

When a child is sick, Swedish parents may use a 120 leave days per year per child for temporary care, for children aged up to 16 when seriously ill. Further, two days per child per year are available as leave for parents in order that they may make visits of their under 12-year-olds in day care facility or school. This option is used to a large extent by fathers.

Additional parental insurance covers pregnancy leave and sick child leave. Fathers are permitted to take up to ten "daddy days" after child birth, again with pay equal to sick pay; two days per year per child for parents participating in child care. Finally, parents are permitted to reduce their hours of work when they return to work, up to the child's eighth birthday (Hofferth and Deich 1994). Because of the large proportion of parents who take advantage of parental leave in Sweden, fewer than 2 percent of infants are enrolled in public child care. No society has gone further than Sweden in promoting a total of gender equality that permitted men and women to equally share responsibility for family breadwinning and child care (Haas and Hwang 1995). What has happened in Sweden has been followed by other European

countries, though at a different pace and with other variations (Näsman 1995).

After several previous attempts, the United States Congress passed a Family Medical Leave Act in 1993, mandating the right of employees of a family leave at the time of child birth, adoption, or serious health conditions of a child or parent and to temporary medical leave at the time of employee's own serious health condition, with adequate protection of employee's employment and benefit rights. Unlike the European countries, *it was only an unpaid leave*. A recent International Labor Organization study found that maternity benefits in the United States are among the stingiest in the industrial world. A third of 120 nations surveyed guarantee paid leave, typically between 14 and 24 weeks (Teepin 1998). As important as a job-protected, 12-week leave was, without some income protection, some working mothers, as much as they might want to take advantage of the policy, had difficulty using it because they could not afford the loss of income. Nevertheless, many did take advantage of it.

Another way of making it possible for a parent to remain in the home, if the parents desire to do so, is for the [IX] *government to pay a child or family allowance*. More than 80 countries have family allowances, yet no country comes close to fully compensating parents for the economic cost of raising children. All European countries, and every industrialized country, except the United States, provides such benefits today. There never has been enough support in the United States Congress to pass legislation, despite the long-standing presence of such programs in almost all other major countries. European countries have established far more generous income-transfer systems that benefit children in general and poor children in particular. In contrast, the United States provides benefits only to *some* poor children, and at non-uniform levels.

A more heavy-handed, legalistic way to "help" children by saving their families is to [X] *make divorce more restrictive*. Since 1960, the divorce rate has more than doubled and remains higher than in other countries. Children living with a divorced parent are

four times more likely to be poor. Amato and Booth (1997) use data from a large national sample of families to isolate the effects of divorce on children. They estimate that at most, a third of divorces involving children are so devastating to children that they are likely to benefit if their parents divorce, but about 70 percent involve what they call “low-conflict marriages,” marriages that apparently do less harm and where the children would benefit if their parents did not divorce. Amato and Booth assert that future generations would be well-served if parents remained together for the sake of the children until the children are grown. They believe in the adults sacrificing some of their happiness instead of expecting children to sacrifice theirs. They suggest spending one-third of one’s life living in a marriage that is less than satisfactory in order to benefit children—children that parents elected to bring into the world—is not an unreasonable expectation. It is a matter of parental responsibility to forego adult desires for freedom, romance, sexual gratification and self-actualization and to seek advice on how these matters might be resolved rather than choosing to divorce.

Westman (1994) recommends an even more stringent marriage restriction for the benefit of children, namely [XI] *licensing parents*. Westman argues that whether or not children are cared for at home is not the important consideration. It is incompetent parenting that is most important (Westman 1996). Although incompetent parents are estimated to be a small fraction of all parents, they gravely endanger our society, according to Westman. Westman estimates that only about 4 percent of parents in the United States are grossly incompetent but that 3.6 million children have been damaged by both neglect and abuse. Parenthood should not be seen as a biological right, he argues, but would call for a nurturing home and adequate education for all children. Parents would assume primary responsibility for the child’s emotional, social, and intellectual growth. It is time, says Westman, to protect children from incompetent parents by setting parenting standards through licensing. Criteria for licensing would include: attaining adulthood by the parent to care for and

nurture the child and possession of basic knowledge of child-rearing since competent parenting is essential if the child is to grow into responsible citizenship in a democratic society.

The popular social science journal, *Society*, organized what it called a Symposium on licensing parents. Eight social scientists were asked to respond to Westman's proposal. Only one of the eight, Lykken (1996), supported Westman's proposal. Schiedeman (1996) saw the idea of the state deciding on who should have children as a notorious idea; Ginzberg (1996) called it a far-out, even wild proposal as a way to respond to such a serious dysfunctional aspect of contemporary American life; Epstein (1996) saw it as technically and politically unworkable and as an abhorrent idea; and Donahue (1996) felt that the sponsors of these proposal were driven by fear and a tacit admission that existing social policy had failed. Licensing parents will not meet with approval in contemporary American society.

Public policy issues that affect children do not generally attract substantial and sustained public interest in any country. Children constitute the largest disenfranchised segment of even democratic societies. The concept of a child as a person with rights as well as needs is relatively new. Children easily become victims; if they have rights, redress is possible. One way to deal with the problem of disenfranchised children, rather than leaving it to unofficial child advocacy groups, such as the Children's Defense Fund as is true in the United States, would be to institutionalize it as has been done in Norway. There are now four countries with a public representative for children, but only in Norway is the position a national, public position, created by an act of Parliament. In 1981, the Norwegian Parliament passed the Commissioner for Children Act. The Office of Ombud for Children is independent of all other institutions. The child ombud has the right and the obligation to criticize any administrative level, group organization, or person who disregards the interests of children. The ombud sees that legal provisions for the care of children's interests are fulfilled; proposes initiatives that can strengthen children's legal security; puts forth proposals to solve or prevent

conflict between children and society; and sees that the public and private sectors have adequate information on children's rights and initiatives (Martinson 1992). The ombud has no authority to act, only the right to speak. Limitations on the ombud's authority were necessary to allay the fears of those who worried about what child advocacy would mean to the privacy of the family and to parental authority. The United States does not have an Office of Ombud for Children, and there has been little agitation to create one, but [XII] *a public representative for children's concerns* would be in order.

There are also things that business can do to make work life more agreeable for parents with children, though it is not alone the fault of business that both parents being employed has quadrupled in the last 15 years. But business has some responsibility for wages paid and for hours worked. A Family Work Institute study surveyed almost 3,000 workers nationwide finding that there is more rather than less pressure on workers today. The hours worked for all employees who worked more than 20 hours per week has increased from 43.6 hours in 1977 to 47.1 hours today, or 3½ hours more per week. Also, the number of married employees with employed partners has increased by 18 percent in the last 20 years. Couples are working "harder, longer, and faster" (Tevlin 1998). From where are they "buying" the extra hours? Seventy percent of them feel they are short-changing their child. Working wives and mothers are an important bulwark against erosion of living standards for millions of Americans. After a long spell of wage stagnation, working families are faring better. But they have to put in significantly longer hours to keep from slipping back. A key finding of *The State of Working America 1998-1999* released by the Economic Policy Institute indicates that the extent to which the typical American family has been able to hold its ground is the large increase in the hours worked by married women. Were it not for the extra hours of work provided by working wives, the average income of these families would have fallen in the 1990s. The United States has the dubious distinction of having the longest family work week for an advanced economy. Without the wives' extra time on the job, their incomes would decline.

The biggest winners resulting from the benefits of better economic times have been corporate profits, stock market investments and the pay of top executives.

Another disturbing trend has been the rise in job insecurity. The report shows a reduction in the ranks of workers who have held their current jobs for at least ten years. While many laid-off workers eventually found other jobs, they usually had to accept less pay (Rennert 1998).

One might expect a reaction from families in the face of a society that takes from them the economic benefits that derived from raising children without providing more of the cost of child rearing in return. Working parents require [XIII] a *shorter work week or more part-time work and adequate pay*.

Businesses sometimes are perceived today as having a larger role in society, particularly as the federal government has slowed spending on social programs. Many businesses have helped; business has assisted families by *building housing* occupied by employers and others; *contributed money, material and expertise to public schools* to help students become potential employees; *helped employees cope with divorce, domestic abuse and suicide*; *juggled work and personal time to find time for care for the aging parent*; *provided flexible work hours* on some jobs, making it easier to coordinate work and child care; and *provided education and work training*, perhaps the largest commitment to social concerns.

In a proposal from the former President Clinton, employers are urged to *build on-site day care* with the help of new tax credits for business; *improve safety and training for children*; *promote scholarships* for child-care workers to subsidize their training and increase their pay, thereby improving quality of care and reducing worker turnover. The proposal has appeal for both political parties and some action is likely forthcoming.

One important but time-consuming activity in early child care for working mothers is the feeding of newborns; studies have shown good results from breast-feeding. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be fed breast milk for the first 6 to 12 months of life. For a mother who chooses to nurse her baby

and to be employed at the same time, the Norwegian government has worked out a system of accommodation.

Norwegian law gives *breast-feeding mothers an hour a day off* until the baby is 9 months old, and longer if a doctor's note confirms that nursing is necessary. In the United States, breast-feeding has been separated from nursing with the use of the breast pump, which makes it possible for a mother to emit milk in one place, to be fed to her baby from a bottle in another place. A group of companies in California provides special rooms and breaks for milk-producing mothers. These rooms have milk-producing mothers but no nursing babies. The room is equipped instead with electric breast pumps, sterile jars and refrigerators.

One gets a feeling for the state's and businesses' attitude toward working mothers who have babies in a recent law passed in the state of Minnesota. According to the law, mothers are now entitled to *unpaid* breaks and a place approximate to the work area, other than a toilet stall, to pump breast milk privately. Employers must make a reasonable effort to comply, unless it would unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. The law contains no penalties for violations, but it does exempt breast-feeding mothers from indecent exposure laws (de Flebre 1998)!

Practicing corporate good citizenship can have payoffs for business in productivity and self-esteem of workers. Of course, a globally competitive business can become too socially generous and suffer in the marketplace; this is part of the balancing act.

There are things that parents with children can do themselves to enhance the child's well-being even when both parents need or want to work. [XV.] *Sharing roles* or "busting the masculine mystique" is one way of evening the inequities between husbands and wives of children. If they want to improve the quality of marriage and family roles, one way of doing so is to strengthen the relationship between the parents. This can be done through workplace policies that make it easier for husbands and wives to share breadwinner and child-care roles and improve the well-being of the children. Amato and Booth (1997) see a shift toward greater

gender equity as likely. For example, 29 percent of husbands in their study report an increase in the proportion of household chores they do, compared to 14 percent who report a decrease. Amato and Booth are hopeful that a more egalitarian division of household labor might mean that the number of egalitarian marriages will increase in the future. Whether this indicates a change of heart on the part of men who see their working wives struggling with a second job—housework and care of children—or that the masculine mystique has been broken, the unfinished business of the women's movement has been somewhat successful in changing the role of men. Families are as much man's concern as woman's. One would hope that mothers do not become as desperate as the young mother who locked her young son in the trunk of her car while she went to work claiming she couldn't afford a babysitter (Associated Press 1998)!

Shared-role families can opt for their own home-based care, which is convenient and less expensive than quality day care. Furthermore, it causes fewer health problems for children since the children are not placed in day care, does not disrupt parent-child bonds, and causes no cognitive deficit (Broude 1996).

One-third of all dual-career couples with children under 5 years of age work back-to-back shifts. Conditions that make it feasible for both parents to combine work and child care are to have adaptable time at work—[XVI] *more part-time jobs, flex time, and a shorter work week*, for instance. When mother is at work, father is at home with the children. Couples that have back-to-back shift arrangements often express themselves as happier with their work, more loyal and willing to work harder. This arrangement is satisfactory for the children since it means they always have a parent at home, but it does mean that the couple sacrifice much of their time together, resulting in a substantially higher divorce rate than average (Shellenbarger 1998).

[XVII.] A second thing that career couples can do is to *postpone entry into a career* for one of them for a matter of years. Since most young mothers and fathers can anticipate a working life of 25-40 years or more, taking time out for the relatively brief

space of 2-5 years still leaves sufficient time to grow professionally, to achieve personal satisfaction, and to build a financial safety net, though they may take a career hit to some extent for doing so (Fox 1996). It may be time for parents to rethink the meaning of the word “career” with women living an average of 80 years and men an average of 72 years, it may not be necessary for both to hurry into a career—couple it with the care of small children and plan to end active work life at 65 or less when the children are long gone from the home and the nest is empty.

Another way to give more attention to children is to [XVIII] *adopt a simpler life-style* that denies or postpones some of the material goods deemed necessary. A large portion of U.S. families, even though classified as poor, have more material goods, such as color TV, VCRs, microwaves, dishwashers, and dryers, than all families in a number of other countries, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. When parents decide that both parents must work they are often choosing to sustain a higher material standard of living (Broude 1996).

We will not be able to eliminate *day care as a backup system* for couples both of whom have to or choose to work. In fact, we have had a rather dismal backup system of day care for 30 years or more. The former President Clinton proposed several methods to dramatically boost the availability of high-quality child care and to help working families obtain it. The proposal is wide-ranging including increasing federal money in the form of block grants to the states to underwrite child care for poorer families; increasing federal income tax credits that parents can use for child-care expenses; doubling the number of children in Head Start preschool programs; and providing comprehensive educational, psychological, and health services to children at risk of poor outcomes because they face social-environmental disadvantages or have developmental disabilities.

Early intervention is a more effective and less costly strategy for some substantial portion of children than is special education, according to recent evidence (Reynolds and Wolfe 1997). Early

intervention cannot overcome all problems; it cannot overcome the effects of poor role-models and substandard schools (Reynolds et al., 1997).

On the other hand, there are major problems of relatively poor quality day care, especially for infants and toddlers—high quality care is often not affordable, there are long waiting lists to be accepted, they do not accept children on part-time schedules, they charge fees when parents arrive late to pick up a child, there is no back-up facility for mildly-ill children, and they are inflexible about other practices meeting employees' workplace demands (Slants and Trends 1997).

The share of children in the total population continues to decline. Does this mean that the fewer children in society receive the same proportion of resources that society made available to a greater number of children earlier? Or does it indicate less political sensitivity to children's needs? According to studies of poverty, the latter seems to be true. At the same time that the proportion of children in the population goes down, the poverty rate among children goes up (Qvortrup et al., 1994).

Since we place responsibility for children so largely in the hands of parents, what are parents to do? Our society not only has shown itself to be inimical to children, but appears to devalue parenting to such an extent that good parenting is exceedingly difficult and almost impossible. *Eliminating children from the family would be the rational economic thing to do!* Couples do not need children for any practical purpose, and, practically speaking, they would almost always be better off economically without them (Leach 1994). Most couples have chosen to reduce the number of children they bear and rear; fewer couples choose to have no children. If couples continue to bear children, which they surely will, *child care should become a major family function*—with all that it implies, especially for the care of infants and toddlers—and *every effort should be made to assist the family in achieving their primary goal*—with all that this implies in economic cooperation and favorable government and business policy and practice.

Without the assistance of the business community and the support of government policy, the family inexorably moves toward the fulfilling of its economic function with child rearing as a secondary function, as no function, or as a function hired out to day care.

Returning to the question implied by the title of this book, should day care take care of America's children? Not with the limited day care we have available in America today; certainly not for infants and toddlers less than two years old. We must never forget, as Children's Defense Fund literature reminds us, that 6 out of 7 child-care centers provide care that is mediocre to poor; that one in 8 provide care that could jeopardize children's safety and development; and that 1 in 3 family day cares could be harmful to a child's development.

For children 2 to 3 years old, placement in a quality day care should be satisfactory for up to half days. Older children might thrive on quality day care for longer periods.

As a goal of our society, providing quality day care centers throughout the country and keeping them affordable for parents may be a necessary temporary goal, but *the long range goals must be to build and support families that are able to care for themselves and their children, and to enjoy the presence that children bring to family life.*

Chapter 9

Educating Young Children: The Family and the Schools

Along with the family, kindergarten and elementary schools are *child-care institutions* since they relieve parents of child-care responsibilities for part of the day. Mothers and fathers, from the very start, regard their newborn infant as a person with character and wishes which they mold and develop. When the child is old enough, he/she learns to have action roles in family life through tasks they are able to perform—self-care activities; how to clean their room; set the table; wash dishes; and many other things—*active things*. Children become part of the division of labor in the home; they participate as independent collaborators. Their abilities will be used and built on as they mature (Mayall 1994). They have capacities, almost imperceptible at first, to influence their parents and the social conventions at home (Solberg 1996; Mayall 1994). They “teach” their parents to characterize them as people. Both parent and child value children’s independence. It is at home that social justice for children first begins (Oldman 1994).

The school benefits as well; children who are attached at home are more likely to do well in school and in relationships in the years to come. A child’s well-being can be described as surprisingly simple and extraordinarily important—they require a caring family, acceptance by peer groups, and the ability to function without embarrassment or fear in school and other adult settings (Sutherland 1973). A secure attachment is enhanced through a child’s interaction with predictable parents and other adults (Erickson 1997).

Most parents accept the fact that the young require security and protection that the school can give while they acquire the skills (through adult tutelage) that make it possible for them to succeed

on their own (Elkind 1994). Parents alone cannot provide all the things their children need to know nor is it necessary to do so.

Society is willing to help. The first decades of the 20th century witnessed a movement toward a broadly-based parenthood in which mothers and fathers shared responsibility for the children's care with school professionals, public health officials, the medical profession, and ultimately the state (Dye 1986).

Parents growing conviction that they alone could not reduce infant mortality, for instance, and the increased medical help and government involvement necessary to preserve the well-being of their babies, resulted in the hundreds of thousands of letters parents wrote to the Federal Children's Bureau asking for help. Public opinion polls indicate that two-thirds of parents believe they are less willing to make sacrifices for their children than their parents were (Mintz and Kellogg 1988), nor need they make all the sacrifices with professional persons there to help.

Separating children from their parents' authority assumes forms of segregation, which have consequences for (1) the type of tasks the adult society through the school assigns to children; (2) the nature of care institutionally provided for children; (3) the way children experience the attitudes and measures undertaken by adult society.

It is a moot question whether the family can be assured that it will be the primary source of influences that mold the remainder of children's lives. There are some parents, however, who fear that public school will be a challenge to the parent's authority. They fear that children will acquire knowledge and values that are suspect or out of harmony with what the parents believe. In 1996, more than 500,000 American parents were teaching their children at home, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Geddes 1997). Some parents see *secular humanism* used in teaching in the public schools as a competing "religious" belief system to their own belief system. A series of Supreme Court decisions beginning in 1962 has done much to secularize public schools. Secular humanism emphasizes the use of science, reason, and critical intelligence to explain natural phenomena and to solve human

problems. These parents contend that as a man-centered belief system, secular humanism is presented in public schools as a violation. They are convinced that the use of textbooks which omit references to the significance of religion in American history and in current American life, as well as textbooks which teach students that moral values are personal are in error. A so-called pro-family movement has sought the restoration of prayer in schools, screening of textbooks, limits in students' access to contraceptives, and reversal of the Supreme Court decisions on abortion (Mintz and Kellogg 1988). Schools are deluged with demands that parental consent be required before a vast array of topics may be discussed with their children. With the conservative Eagle Forum's help, a quarter of a million letters were circulated throughout the country urging parents to prevent their schools from "manipulating children's values and moral standards" through textbooks, audio/visual materials, or supplementary assignments.

And they succeeded; a recent study by the Virginia Board of Education verified that all major publishers of high school literature and anthologies delete some 400 sexually explicit lines from *Romeo and Juliet* without telling readers that the text is incomplete. The zealotry of sensors can convince educators that academic freedom and critical thinking do not have strong community support, when in fact they do.

We continue to remove children from the center of our lives and our homes as the dedication of parents shifts in favor of work and self-expression that come to compete with time spent with children. This requires a new definition of *children as school-learners*, with work the primary activity only of adults. *Schools are the paradigm institution for children representing society's systematic effort to "normalize" children in accordance with the demands of society.* The elementary school begins a long list of educational institutions devoted to the child's "professional humanity" (Bardy 1994). The ordinary daily self-care they carry out at home, such as pacing the day with activity and rest, eating, drinking, going to the toilet, is also subjected at school to the demands of the school day, mediated

through the teacher. The teacher is the new authority: Where did he or she come from? What are his or her values? Perspectives? Ideology? The teacher knows more than parents at least in some subjects and may teach some competencies that the parents do not possess. A main experience of the six-year-old starting school is discovering that the power, intellect, and authority of the parent are less than the child had assumed up until that time. Adult authority, in school, is more salient and less changeable than adult authority at home. Many teachers think of their school as child-centered, as model environments, as havens of ideals and good practices. If children challenge school norms, teachers are less likely to understand why the child is challenging the norm. Since the school is a model environment, fault must lie with the child, or with the home. The *independence* that teachers aim for in children turns out to be *conformity* with school norms, both academic and social. The schedule does not leave children much time or space for negotiating. Children are mostly dealt with in groups, and individual relationships between child and teacher are time-consuming and maybe thought of as inappropriate. The school is less holistic than parents in their understanding of children and their dealing with children (Mayall 1994).

An orderly school system operating for the benefit of all is a primary goal in American schools. Besides the discipline of learning, halls are monitored, a written authorization is required for absence from school or from class, and a limited number of trips to the toilet are permitted. For instance, during a new teacher's first week as teacher, the eight teachers in her core group advised her to limit students' bathroom visits to three all quarter. When she appeared surprised, they said, "Do the math; 150 kids times 3 bathroom trips—when would any learning get done?" (Miller 1994:1Ex).

I will concentrate less on the 80 percent of children who make a satisfactory adjustment to school and more on the 20+ percent who, for lack of family support or for other reasons, do not find the school adjustment appropriate in meeting their needs and desires (Hopfensberger 1999). A "blue ribbon task force" in Minneapolis is

currently concerned with what is to be done about disruptive students, 20 percent of whom were suspended from school in 1998. The answers suggested are: stricter and more consistent discipline rules, more money for mental health services, and warmer relationships between school and nearby churches and institutions.

Children internalize *childhood* as a subculture, with respect to corresponding and presumably more important super-culture of adults, and within the power of adults to shape children's existence. Some of them opt out and let teachers tell them exactly what they must do. In case of doubt, according to Hengst (1989), children choose the most stupid approaches to learning. They do not enrich the official classroom instruction with their own talents and abilities. They refuse to think in ways imposed by the school, thus they learn to survive as alienated labor. It is difficult to assess what learning processes are taking place in such refusals and resistance.

Being a rule-abiding child involves extensive, sophisticated knowledge and grasp of a wide array of subtleties and nuances of words and actions (Waksler 1987). Stable families make much of the first day of school and it is an awesome occasion for the new pupil. The importance of the school day is emphasized in the stable family by the clothes the child wears, by the pictures that are taken, and by the overly considerate behavior and positive attitudes of parents and siblings. The mother, father, or an older sibling, accompanies the child on the first day, particularly to help meet the new world. Hollos (1984) tells of attending the first day in a school in Norway. Mothers sat in back of the first-grade classroom while the children were told to take their individual seats. The result was a class full of sobbing, cringing, or deadly pale children and embarrassed mothers. Children took refuge in hanging around the teacher and holding onto her hand or her skirt. Teachers tried to discourage such behavior but were often unsuccessful, especially with first-grade girls. In the United States, as well, reports Sorensen (1993), there are differences in appraisal of the first day of school; negative expressions, such as,

weird, worried, terrible, shy, embarrassed, scared, left out—as well as some positive ones: fine, good, happy.

Children in school learn in high density, heterogeneous environments (Finkelhor 1994). Book learning is “unnatural” in the sense that it requires in the young a high degree of concentration and sedateness that runs counter to their inclinations (Postman 1982). School cannot be seen as anything other than a dramatic, revolutionary change in children’s environment and in the psychological and social structuring of their lives (Martinson 1992). The school, for the sake of order, downplays the whole child in favor of the mind of the child (Mayall 1994). After all, school attendance is compulsory, not by choice. The nation is entering an Age of Accountability (Tock 1999)—accountability to parents and accountability to society—but are they accountable to children? Three trends are driving the accountability movement: rising educational requirements to prepare for good jobs, the frustration with the performance of some public schools, and the spread of school choice. Parents want school to offer high standards that encourage all students to take the courses that put them on a track to success. It is questionable if a social space for children still exists in our modern technological age—a space where the child *can become at home in the world*; where he or she can be the subject, not only the object, of history.

From the parent’s point of view, school takes the form of “protected liberation” within which the child’s material and psychological development is encouraged. It is possible to pinpoint the *institutionalization of children* as the moment that signals the entry of the child into the symbolic universe of rules of discipline identified with the logic and practice of technical-scientific knowledge. Placing the child in school and out of productive life postponed for many years the entry of children into the productive labor force. But, as Qvortrup (1990) has argued, one could equally well say that the integration of children into society is occurring earlier and earlier, since it no longer begins with their becoming part of a labor force, but begins with the “artificial life” of the school. The public school takes on an awesome responsibility when

children are under compulsion to leave their families for many hours of the day, for weeks, months, and years on end, to carry out the mandate of the school to make a difference in their lives. It was felt that a new social order triumphed making best use of children. It was industrial society's way of integrating children through schooling into the social division of labor. Child labor was, in a sense, abolished; in school, children began a slow process of acquiring a new product, namely *knowledge* (Sgritta 1994). Children do not work, they "go to school," adults would say. But it is Qvortrup's (1990) contention that children never stop working; they have only changed their work place from home or factory to school. School, homework, and other duties, added together, very often equal or even exceed the number of hours that would be spent at a full-time job (Kovarik 1994). Many of them learn only as much as they "must." For children, a good childhood includes a lot of free time, time to use as they please, time that is "invaded" by educational demands (Kelly 1997).

Keeping schools open longer has been proposed as a way to meet the needs of children. But is it really to meet the needs of children; or is it to meet the needs of parents who are working longer hours, longer days, and have less time to attend to the needs of children? A report of the Education Commission on Time and Learning recommended lengthening the school day and year because the school is asked to do "more things" today. In the United States, school time spent on academic subjects has fallen to 41 percent of the school day as more school time is devoted to "more things"—education about drugs, HIV, sex, violence, and counseling of various kinds. Social demands pressure the school; the limited schedule makes it difficult for students to compete internationally where the nation must compete. "What we are talking about here is nothing less than *fundamentally changing the structure and rhythm of American life*," says Education Secretary Richard Reilly (italics added). The Commission noted that as jobs in the 1990s demand more skills and higher levels of education, students are being asked to learn more. Extend the school day. Extend the

school year. More to learn. More stress. Less time for children. Less time for play.

Stress begins with kindergarten, or earlier. About half of all kindergartners attend full-time programs, partly as a favor to their parents who work. Families favor full-day kindergarten because it is difficult to schedule both kindergarten and separate child-care programs for their children. All-day kindergarten reduces the number of transitions kindergartners experience in a typical day. Other parents prefer the older half-day kindergarten. They feel half-day kindergarten is less expensive, it provides adequate educational and social experiences for young children; full-day is too long for young children—they like to have their children home for a greater part of the day. As more and more mothers find work outside the home, the trend is clearly in the direction of full-day kindergarten (Gisler and Ebert 1997). Recent research confirms that full-day kindergarten belongs to adults and to society—it provides academic and social benefits (Mayall 1994; Gisler and Ebert 1997).

A moot question for our society is: To what extent does childhood belong to children—to what extent does it belong to adults? Should schooling wait until kindergarten? A report of the Carnegie Corporation Task Force on Capital Learning in the Primary Grades proposes that “all children need access to two years of high quality preschool, ...too many mark time waiting for ‘real’ education to begin in kindergarten” (Associated Press 1996:A4).

In the 19th century, school was voluntary—children could attend school or not depending on their own inclinations and the wishes of their parents. Compulsory education laws were not widely enacted until later, stipulating 12 years of age as the legal minimum age for leaving school. Children began to drop out around that age. Gradually adult control and school time and attendance was tightened. *After 1900, no longer could students easily absent themselves from school.* Their total integration into school

coincided with their ceasing to be children. The being of the child is antithetical to the nature of the school.

Children are often perceived as being immature, incompetent and manipulatable “for their own good” (Kurth-Schai 1988). Children are expected to spend many years isolated from the realities of community life in this artificial environment, forgetting that the world of childhood and the world of play are almost inseparable (Van Hoom, et al. 1993). In the school they are deprived of much of their play time and deprived of participating either in significant community decision making or socially-approved productive work. An ideal preparation for factory work was said to be the social relations of the school, especially in its emphasis on discipline, punctuality, acceptance of authority, and accountability for one’s work. So children, in a macroeconomic society, have not lost their value; what children owe their parents has shifted from the family level to the societal level (Qvortrup 1987). Children are educated for their future role in society—the economy, not for their future role in the family. The true aim is to instill values and skills in children with a view toward their ultimate integration into society, that is, adult society. Their total integration coincides in time with their ceasing to be children. To be a human being is reserved for those who are eventually integrated into society (Qvortrup 1987).

Psychometrics is blamed for contemporary education’s “inertia” (Elkind 1991). “Contemporary research on child’s disposition to learn indicates that excessive emphasis on skill performance or academic tasks has cumulative negative effects on their mastery, effort, and challenge-seeking disposition” (Katz 1991:64). “The goal of such education is to raise the achievement levels for each and every child, beginning in early childhood... and continuing through preschool and elementary education.” The Report of the Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades is concerned that all the nation’s children become competent, confident learners. “The majority of American school children are achieving well below the level they should be attaining” (Report 1996). “Enough is known... states the report, to take immediate

steps to improve results for children toward the goal of appropriate education for all.”

Children who score high on tests—academically appropriate tests—are children prepared for high-tech positions. In American history there have been five industrial revolutions (Zuckerman 1999). The current revolution is based on semi-conductors, fiber optics, genetics, and software. It is believed that in global competition, this is putting the United States further and further ahead of other nations. Information technology counts for so much. However, a report of the American Electronics Association (AEA) found that high-tech degrees—including engineering, mathematics, physics and computer science—declined 5 percent between 1990 and 1996, and the trend is continuing. The AEA is of the opinion that schools must do more to get students ready to tackle a high-tech education (National Digest 1999)—high achievement standards that encourage all students to take courses that put them on track to succeed. The students’ family circumstances strongly influence their level of achievement. “Simply put, the more privileged students’ backgrounds are, the higher the scores are likely to be” (Toch 1999:48).

Can we say that the school is a child-friendly institution? It is a debatable question. In the 20th century the model of the school as a naturally developing child has come to be one of the cornerstones of modern educational systems (James and James 1999). It is a model that enhances the image of the child as a person. But is a naturally developing child a child who succeeds in competing for highest scores on competitive tests? The aim of education, from a societal perspective, is to produce children who will score high on tests of achievement (Elkind 1991). Sitting in a classroom being taught basic literacy and numeracy has become a standard feature of childhood.

Developmentally-oriented teachers seek to create curious, active learners. There is a need for teacher training in child development. If the learner is seen as a growing individual with developing abilities, the aim of education must be to facilitate this growth (Elkind 1991). To confront a child with tasks for which he is

not ready and in which he is not interested, gives him a feeling of failure (Katz 1991). Becoming a curious, active learner—self-motivated—has to *precede the acquisition of particular information and therein lies the difference between the developmental approach and the psychometric approach to education* (Elkind 1991). The developmental approach tries to create students who “*want to know* rather than seeking to produce students who *know what we want*” (Elkind 19912).

Current understanding of development suggests that, in principle, the younger the learner, the larger the proportion of time should be allocated to activities (Katz 1991). The status of children as stakeholders in the process of development is “often neglected within developmental theories constructed by adults to help other adults regulate children’s lives” (Woodhead 1999:15).

Contemporary research suggests that the first 6 or 7 years of development are critical in the development of competence. An appropriate pedagogy for young children is a developmental one; one that provides ample opportunity for them to be engaged in activities in which cooperation and coordination of effort are functional and consequential (Katz 1991). From a developmental perspective, children who become curious will acquire much of the knowledge advocated and many other things as well. The education of very young children did not become accepted in the United States until the *reform movement* of the 1960s (Elkind 1994).

Children are very creative between ages 3 and 5; afterwards they become conservative developmentally (Overton 1999). An underlying psychological assumption is that a person’s spontaneous impulses are intrinsically good and that maturity is not a process of settling down and suppressing intellectual needs but of achieving one’s potential (Mintz and Kellogg 1988).

Not that children can develop adequately on their own. Outside the social system the child certainly will fail to develop the means of functioning necessary within the social system, for children cannot copy or imitate the models of childhood if they do not know them. So the child lives in two inseparable but

irreconcilable social worlds: the world of adults and the world of children. Left to their own, children would not develop the essential capacities to operate within the adult social order or, more specifically, the world of work (Van Hoorn et al. 1993).

The idea that children have rights validated in the law is not only a recent phenomenon but a revolutionary one—the idea that children’s particular interests and needs should be of account in legal proceedings. The model of the passive and dependent child has been replaced by the idea of the articulate and active child with a voice that should be heard (James and James 1999). Children’s rights activists piggybacked on the Civil Rights Movement and attempted to include children within the category of persons who could advance legal, recognized claims, and assert public entitlements. The state has both a negative responsibility not to intrude unnecessarily into the child’s life and an affirmative obligation to provide services and benefits. Children are to enjoy the same scope of civil liberties as adults—freedom of speech, freedom from unreasonable searches by government officials, the right to equal protection of the law, and the right to procedural due process. Since children have different needs stemming from their inability to care for themselves, they are entitled to certain government services and benefits—child care, food, and prenatal care.

As early as the 1920s, the Supreme Court began to articulate progressive models of education emphasizing that children should take part in *a participating educational process with maximum student interaction and independent thought*—consistent with the developmental approach. The model held forth until the early 1970s when the Court began its transition to a more pronounced emphasis on *schooling as the promotion of fundamental social values*. It has been little more than two decades since the Supreme Court first *expressly recognized the personhood of children under the Constitution*; the Court has been ambivalent about that decision ever since (Melton 1989).

To get a clearer picture of how the public schools see the rights of children, one can study decisions of the United States Supreme

Court. The United States Supreme Court cases indicate a reversal of support for children's *democratic freedoms*, replacing it with *support for indoctrination in societal and community values* (Salomone 1989).

Although a developmental approach is being rhetorically well-received in educational circles, it has little chance of being implemented. No classroom or school can be genuinely developmentally appropriate when its underlying pedagogy is psychometric, indoctrinating in fundamental social values.

In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, a case that represents the high point of the student's rights and the Court's implicit embrace of a progressive ideology for public education, the Court stated that "students in school as well as out of school are 'persons' under the Constitution, possess the fundamental rights which the state must respect." "*The Court would never again make such a bold, sweeping statement of children's rights in any context*" (Salomone 1989:186; italics added). No matter what the U.S. Supreme Court said in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, there were no First Amendment rights in the school. There was an almost universal notion that what children had to say was unimportant, immature, irresponsible, perhaps nasty, and thereby would only disturb the smooth-running of the school (Gross & Gross 1977).

The twenty years between *Tinker*, 1968, and *Hazelwood*, 1988, witnessed a crisis in values throughout the country and a conservative backlash to the perceived excesses of progressive education. Issues like sexuality education, abortion, feminism, and school prayer began to tear communities apart. The question became: Can the Constitution be so broadly defined as to permit school officials almost boundless discretion in cutting off free speech and thereby foreclose students from all channels of critical thought and debate?

The case law demonstrates that the Court moved from a progressive vision of schooling as a *preparatory process of education* to a view of education as a *mechanism for inculcating societal and community values*. A parallel development has been

the Court's changing views of children from self-determining individuals to persons in need of state protection; cases indicate an evolving viewpoint on the Court that weighs heavily on the side of institutional autonomy at the expense of individual fights. No one can doubt the need for school officials to maintain a safe and effective learning environment. The Court appears to have weighed the school's need to maintain its institutional integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness against the interests of students that school officials will treat fairly and openly.

According to the National Committee for Citizens in Education, over a period of five years, case workers have counseled numerous parents who claim that their children suffered from disciplinary practices. Most of the complaints concerned corporal punishment and out-of-school suspensions for trivial offenses or truancy. The Court has moved in the direction of handing over almost unbridled discretion to local school officials. As long as children are compelled to attend school, school administrators can ignore decisions protecting student's rights. Most students never hear about the court decisions and few parents would defend their children if it meant going to court (Gross & Gross 1977). The school no longer serves as an arena where ideas can be tested and challenged in the search for truth. The curriculum becomes narrowed to reflect a set of values, and students are deprived of the stimulation and challenge necessary to develop creative minds, creating a school climate in which students may develop a cynicism toward government authority. For the curriculum must be maintained, the schedule must be adhered to, the learning environment must be kept constant. The decision of adults have the upper-hand in the lives of children. *The school has become a major challenge to the freedom of children to think.*

From society's point of view, *early intervention* in the home is a more effective and less costly strategy for a substantial portion of children than is *special education*, according to recent evidence (Reynolds and Wolfe 1997). Early intervention cannot overcome all problems, however; it cannot overcome the effects of poor role-models and substandard schools (Reynolds et al., 1997).

There are those who argue against the overorganization of children and in favor of the autonomous child and children's own way of life—"the role of a childhood"—and the argument that children's own way of life and play are more educational than psychometric activities provided by adults. Play as the fundamental learning activity emphasizes that there are other ways to influence children's lives than through organized activities and schooling (Frønes 1995).

According to play literature, being "freely chosen" is one of the distinguishing characteristics of play. Play activities are rarely referred to as "work" even when a great deal of productive learning is taking place. In fact, when children are asked if learning can take place during play activity, most children respond negatively (Sherman 1997). The benefits of play include an increase in problem-solving ability; an encouragement of diverse thinking; an increase in social development; a consolidation of previous learning; and creativity and interaction with objects and environments are increased through play. Play advocates would argue that these benefits provide a strong rationale for making play a part of the curriculum of the school for young children (Sherman 1987). Decades of research has demonstrated play plays crucial role in healthy development of children from infancy through adolescence. Yet children's right to play is challenged as a learning method in our society. According to the Association for Childhood Education International, play needs to be strongly supported for all children recognizing the need for children of all ages to play and affirm the essential role of play in children's healthy development (Isenberg and Quisenberry 1988).

A critical task for educators in a democratic society is to promote young people's active participation in democratic decision-making processes. There would seem to be no coherent reason for exempting the child from democratic accountability. In fact, the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights gives a measure of official recognition to children being involved in decisions concerning their well-being and their living conditions, though the

Convention by no means promotes any kind of children's rights radicalism.

Opportunities for children to participate in decisions affecting their lives in school and in community are rare. A university professor and a second-grade teacher studied 18 children's questions during literature discussions in the course of one school year. They found that children were eager to pose questions that addressed what they needed and wanted to understand about literature and life. The children listened carefully to each other and willingly discussed the questions presented. They exhibited a desire to communicate about what perplexed and interested them. The researchers had to accept that children provided the "right" kinds of discussion questions when they had opportunities to ask about anything they found interesting, curious or confusing (Commeyras and Sumner 1998).

Ann Sherman, in an article "5-year-olds' Perception of Why We Go to School" (1997) aimed to find out what the perceptions of very young children were. Was school seen as an inclusive place for children, a place where they felt they belonged? She discussed two questions. These were "Why we go to school?" and "Who makes me go to school?" It quickly became apparent that the children felt they had no choice—"If you go to school, you will do good things, otherwise you won't know what to do." Already at 5 years old children were aware that they were preparing for the workplace. Play was something trivial, completely separate from the working and learning processes. Recognizing the legal requirement, one child answered, "I go to school so that daddy doesn't go to jail." The children were generally adamant in their openness that school was something they *had* to attend as well as being of crucial importance to their future attainment. Only one child explained "We don't really have to go to school but I don't mind 'cause I like coming to school and so I choose to come here." Many of the children felt pressure from their mothers if they were not going to school on a given morning. If they said they were not going, mothers would say, "Oh yes you are, young man/young lady!"

What disturbed Sherman was that the children felt they had no choice in the process, that everything was determined for them and that the adult authority was and should be supreme (Sherman 1997). The children were sacrificing their childhood to the cause of the collective adult good or, to paraphrase Jenks, children are both volatile and subversive and must be policed if collective life is to be sustained at all (Jenks 1996).

The “containment” of children, which lies at the heart of school indoctrination, depends on the demolition of the child’s ideological and ethical perceptions quite as much as it does on psychological obliteration, tedium and torpor (Kozol 1975; Suransky 1982).

But some children have their own strategy. They offer themselves as objects, protected, recognized, destined as a child to the pedagogical functions. At the same time they are fighting for equal rights. They do not accept the childhood status that adults have given them. Children know that the adult category “childhood” does not fit, but they use it (Reynolds 1989). What we see as we look at the child within this setting is expression of both conformity and resistance. Many children “do” school but in their own way. The children in a school setting may be expressing a quality that is essential to humans in a highly structured setting. The need to react to their world and leave traces, however small, of their having been there (Carere 1987). Many children bring small and pocketable objects that can be brought to school without being detected, objects that bridge the different spheres of life (Thorne 1993). Candy, for instance, rubber binders, bubble gum, extra pens and pencils—even knives and guns. They can be brought out and looked at or used to taunt others with when the teacher isn’t looking. They are materials that are used in an oppositional underlife, objects that children use to resist “total institutions” or settings like prisons, hospitals, or even schools where their growth may or may not be facilitated; they are part of a population kept under control (Thorne 1993).

The school has very little in common with the world in which children live, think, and act as sensuous creatures with bodies. Many children—but by no means all—react to the demands typical of school, without adaptation—disinterest, absenteeism, and aggression. They escape into daydreaming to keep their emotions, senses, and bodies alive. They invent and use numerous deceptions and tricks to undermine the objectives of school, or to get by at a minimum level. They learn how to work by the rule and to not do more than is expected. They work according to the principle of avoiding extreme negative consequences. They do the utmost necessary to avoid teacher's censure.

The Nature of Stress in Childhood

Children in the 1980s and beyond are growing up in a world characterized by pressure to succeed in all areas (Isenberg and Quisenberry 1988). Children are subjected to an education designed to make them suppress their natural energies (Postman 1982). “Sit down,” “Turn around,” “Stop smiling,” “Raise your hand,” “Look at me when I am speaking,” “You know you are not allowed to go to the bathroom now,” are all dimensions of a discourse geared to sensitize the most minute and specific aspects of the individual's psychic and incarnate being to live and function in a precisely ordered, goal-directed work space, in a belief that this will give one the skills and attitudes necessary to have the life that one wants or needs (Waksler 1989).

It is generally acknowledged today that “childhood” is a socially-constructed account (constructed by the adult generation) of the early part of the life course. Whether the early part of the life course should emphasize *work* as a way to learn or *schooling* as a way to learn is made quite explicit in the concept of the “universal child” in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We know what parents want for their children—competence gained in qualified schools; and we know what society wants of children—highly-skilled workers to maintain America's position in the competitive global economy. That American children resist what parents and society think is best for them attests to the

strength of the child's desire to move about, to play, to participate, to be active in life's events. Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that it is part of children's rights to be *prevented from doing work* that is exploitative or harmful; while at the same time, Article 28 states, with equal conviction, that it is part of the children's rights to be educated and that *primary schools should be made compulsory* for that purpose. In other words, the place of work in children's development is implicitly denigrated, while the potential of schooling is idealized (Woodward 1999).

Modern textbook content seems to agree about the place of work. Summarizing indexes for eight child-development textbooks published between 1987 and 1995 revealed 157 entries for "family," 126 for "play," and 108 for "school," but only one entry for "work" (Woodward 1999). It is the goal that the opportunities be at hand to ensure that all the nation's children become competent; confident through schooling, not through working.

The Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades developed "a comprehensive learning strategy for American children." The report asserts, categorically, that American school children are achieving well below the level they should attain. "...virtually all American children can learn and achieve to much higher levels than they are reaching today." "...we must commit ourselves to raising the achievement levels for each and every child beginning in early childhood" (1996:130). The trends that are driving this "accountability movement" are: rising educational requirements for good jobs, the public's frustration with the performance of many public schools, and the spread of school choice (Toch 1999).

By the age of 9 at least, some children recognize the value of school-based education as a good. Some come to understand the implications of compulsory all-day schooling. They know that graduation acquired in our "achievement-oriented society" is an indispensable condition for later social and economic opportunities. If they do not understand the importance of schooling, their parents do, and communicate it to them. Also,

nearly everyone their age is in school, hence they find friends there involved in a common program of studies, music, sports, plays and other activities. Cultivation of a sense of beauty is largely delegated to the school and to this age group. Of all age groups, it is children who, by far, spend much of their time on art, making music, dancing, reading literature, putting on plays, and other cultural activities, as well as receiving the excitement of reaching some proficiency in sports.

They also experience the broadening effects of learning about different places and different ways of life (Preuss-Lausitz 1995).

The position of children was surely precarious in “traditional” society when uneducated or poorly educated children became part of the industrial labor force (Wintersberger 1994). Perhaps excluding children from the world of work and putting them in the school, as we have done, was not the only solution, but it was the solution at the time and it remains. The introduction of protective rights of children involves the deprivation of some rights for adults because of these prohibitions. The prohibitions help to conceal the fact that alternative possibilities are conceivable (e.g., solutions that would give freedom to children and place more restrictions on the free movement of adults, for instance). As Elwood Patterson Cubberly put it: “Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped into products to meet the various demands of life” (Greenleaf 1979:129). An average school day from which few attempts are made to depart, is a physical and spatial unit for each age and subject group with its equal premises and a period of time, an annual report at the end of which the class compliment changes.

When, and to what extent, a developmental approach—an approach emphasizing the growth of the individual mind through stimulation—got its start in American education is difficult to ascertain. Certainly one person partially responsible for its development was the German educator Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) who established the first kindergartens in Germany. Through his studies, Froebel arrived at a vision of the natural path of child development. He chose to educate based on the child’s self-

activity. He believed that intellectual growth was possible for the spontaneous, unhurried child. He worked with children in the preschool years before they started schooling and became intellectually rigid, in his mind.

Froebel's educational ideas spread to America and the first kindergarten was opened in 1856. The child was born good in Froebel's opinion; the bad is the result of inadequate education and neglect of parents. The child is dynamic in change, not a passive vessel to be filled with knowledge (Willis and Stegman 1951).

It was about one hundred years later that the War on Poverty in America developed such programs as Head Start, programs intended to stimulate the development of the mind of the disadvantaged child.

School Stress and Stress "Managers"

Do children ever learn to willingly comply with the rules of the school? Miller, a reporter who visited an 8th grade class was impressed "with the absolute nuttiness of 8th graders" (Miller 1994). She found them to be "among the most restless, egocentric creatures on earth." Two students arrived without books, another drank directly from the gooseneck lab faucet, one blew whopper gum bubbles and six students were missing. One had taken off for the bathroom without permission and one was at a sink scrubbing off ink from a pen she cracked in two. Students appeared to take turns being disruptive, "as if they were passing a baton of bad behavior." A boy hurled paper footballs at a girl, then skidded to the floor to retrieve missiles she'd thrown back. There was a constant drone of conversation, rapping of pens, drumming of tennis shoes and scraping of chairs. One girl's "major creative outlet seemed to be finding excuses to get out of her seat." Dismissing the class was "like opening the gates at a stockyard." Admittedly, this was a late class that had been in their seats pretty much the whole day. One boy was asked about his disobedience. "I get all wound up," he said; "I don't know... maybe we're trying to take control, then kids feel they have more power."

Some struggle and competition between pupils in school is quite universal. Whiting and Edwards (1988) found in their study of children in 13 communities around the world that in societies where students spend extended periods of time segregated into age groups, there is high a proportion of struggles and competition. In a society, such as ours, where conflict within the family and where violence among youth in the community are on the increase, the school becomes aware of its need to be a refuge, to buffer children from violence and to teach children how to resolve conflicts peacefully. Against the experience of violence and anxiety, the school is called upon to be a site of nonviolence and to convey a sense of security.

Research documents a high prevalence of specific, as well as overall and multiple, pains in school that children feel—headaches, stomach aches, fatigue, dizziness, tension, restlessness, concentration problems, sadness, and poor adjustment are part of everyday experiences. Pain is a strong determinant of discomfort in school children (Kristjansdottir 1997). Children are not physically built; they need to run about, play, and make things (Elkind 1994). Teachers are aware of the health threatening aspects of school routines—boredom and tedium, stressful social relations with adults and children from which the children cannot easily escape.

Today, the school tries to “deal” with such problems. Anti-social behavior brings on the attention of school psychologists, social workers, truancy workers, law-enforcement officials, and other school authorities (Elkind 1994). When a child misses school, a truancy worker is dispatched to their home to find out why.

Who is to decide how much fidgeting is too much, asks Diller in a book on the drug Ritalin—a drug used to “smooth the edges of human diversity.” The United States produces and uses 90 percent of the world’s supply of Ritalin. Conformity is deemed necessary to the smooth running of a classroom. Difficulty, disappointment, and sadness are not accepted aspects of the human condition—“they are subversive examples we must somehow defeat” (Diller 1998:316). The prescription of Ritalin and other such drugs has

increased. As of 1997, among boys age 6-12 in some communities, up to 17 percent receive the drug—the equal of one in six boys. The drug is used because of its “capacity to focus one’s attention.”

School psychologists, social workers, law enforcement officials, and other school authorities, become active—not to get children out of the system, but on how to adjust them to the school’s demand routines (Reynolds 1989). And the routines can be demanding. Anti-social behavior brings children to their attention (Elkind 1984). If a child becomes too obstreperous, he or she may be labeled a deviant and be sent to alternative school where adult specialists work to get him or her “adjusted” (Saransky 1982).

A “blue ribbon task force” was convened recently to grapple with a question of growing concern in Minneapolis public schools—namely, what to do about disruptive students. 10,000 of the 49,000 (20%) students in Minneapolis public schools were suspended last year. The solutions recommended are not particularly unusual—stricter and more consistent disciplinary rules, more for mental-health services, and warmer relationships between school and nearby churches and institutions (Hopfensperger 1999).

What has happened to children’s time? Hofferth (1999) has noticed some marked changes in the way children spend their time in only the 16 years from 1981 to 1997. Two major differences noted were: children’s free time has declined, and free time is increasingly structured. The major causes are the increased time spent in school—the largest increase was the time preschoolers spent in school or in day care. Play time suffered, decreasing from 15 hours and 54 minutes in 1981 to 12 hours and 5 minutes in 1997, a decrease of 3 hours and 49 minutes in 16 years. Activities such as walking, hiking and camping declined about 50 percent, though the times were not large to begin with. Church-going also declined by about 40 percent over the period. The time children spent in sports—including standard team time, such as soccer, baseball, basketball, and swimming—almost doubled over the period, from 2 hours and 20 minutes to 4 hours and 20 minutes. Children participated in a wide variety of scheduled and organized sports

activities. Arranging all the activity meant that family life required tight scheduling. Such activity as just “sitting and talking” as a main activity declined dramatically between 1981 and 1997.

Three hundred 10 to 14-year-old children from six less-developed countries—Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua—were asked how they would react to a law that prevented children under the age of 15 from working. Only 28 percent of the group talked about the possibilities of their complying with such regulations. 65 percent talked instead about defying the law, evading regulations, or working “underground.” Recurring themes in the children’s accounts of their working lives was the importance of maintaining social relationships and self-esteem. They talked about feeling proud of what they did. Working children, like all children, proved to be deeply sensitive to what others said about them—to be effective working children enabled them to feel that they were active participants, not passive victims (Woodhead 1999). Which is best for you, they were asked—only work, only school, or going to work and attending school? For 77 percent of them the major choice was the latter across all local studies. In other words, it would appear that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child would have been more balanced if it acknowledged that hazardous work is not the only context that can be harmful to a child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, and social development.

We need to figure out new ways to take some of the damaging pressures off contemporary children (Elkind 1994). Although the stress experienced by children and its damaging effects are being given increased media attention, we still lack a systematic approach to correcting the problems. The challenge is to reconstruct a model of “developing childhood” that can more adequately encompass diverse childhoods, while at the same time promoting children’s fundamental needs and rights (Woodhead 1999).

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