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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses the need for a comprehensive family-centered approach to day care. A hypothetical family situation is used to illustrate that present approaches to day care are not optimally functional because of the dichotomy existing between day care and family life. Historical origins of day care centers and significant changes in the concept of day care are reviewed. It is suggested that federal legislation on day care (e.g., child care tax deductions) is rarely evaluated for potential impact on impact on families. Two elements are suggested as necessary for the development of comprehensive, family-centered child care programs: (1) a broad concept of the role of parents as predominant in child rearing, and (2) new institutional arrangements and structures which enable parents to assume such a role. (BRT)

TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE

Prepared by the staff of:

The Day Care Consultation Service
Bank Street College of Education
610 West 112th Street
New York, New York 10025
(212) 663-7200

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PREFACE:

This proposal represents a beginning, an ending and a renewal.

It is a proposal for a new three-year project. It also represents both a partial report on what five years of day care experience have taught us, and a renewal in the sense that we find ourselves getting back in touch with the vision we had for day care centers four and five years ago, but with far greater understanding than we had at that time.

In 1969, when we first started the Day Care Consultation Service, working out of a small storefront office on Broadway and 108th Street, we believed that community controlled day care centers would multiply and become a force for social change, a force against poverty and oppression. It didn't work out that easily. We soon began to understand the differences between "community" and parent control. We placed additional emphasis on the participation of parents in the governance of centers. Nevertheless, parent and community controlled centers that were envisioned to become places to strengthen families and build community found themselves mired in constant struggles, internal as well as external. Mindless government policies, arbitrary actions and greed tore at the visions people held for their centers. A few programs turned out to be even more oppressive to children and families than many of the older traditional centers.

Somehow we and the day care movement in New York City had gotten off the track. It was difficult to maintain our original vision, and to help others maintain theirs.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where, when or how we began to lose sight of our vision, but we are convinced now that it happened because government placed

too much emphasis on day care centers as institutions -- complex settings for a variety of specialists to "treat" members of abnormal and inadequate families -- and not enough emphasis on centers as places for people (both children and adults) -- comfortable settings in which to establish human relationships of understanding, friendship, and trust in order to support and celebrate one another.

This proposal is written because we believe the entire nation may make the same mistake.

The essential impact on society of how child care and other family services develop in the next decade will be in terms of the impact that these programs will have on human relationships. These new programs can strengthen and enhance relationships, or they can further isolate people, fostering greater and greater dependency (on professionals, institutions, beauracracies, or ideologies).

The importance of day care is most often described in terms of the employment of women or the education of pre-school children. But its impact on society can be far more profound. The future of day care can affect all of us -- our ability to love, to hate, to trust, to value, to exploit, to care for, or to be cared for by others.

We believe that the next three years will be critical years in the development of a national child care policy and eventually a national child care system. The national lobby for day care grows in strength and conviction. Child care bills and amendments are reintroduced in each session of Congress. While government deliberates, more and more women join the work force, thousands of groups develop new day care centers and other new child care programs. A Senator tests his Presidential

prospects as the champion of the American family. President Nixon tentatively supports a negative income tax. Others speak of saving children or preserving childhood as though they were forms of fossil fuel. Much of this is silliness or grotesque but it is the stuff that dreams and government policy are often made of.

Bank Street College of Education
March, 1974

NOTE:

This essay was originally written as part of our proposal for funding. It was also an attempt to gather our thoughts and clarify our vision for a renewed effort to support the development of programs that selected family-centered comprehensive approaches to child care by parent and community groups. We're grateful to the Day Care and Child Development Council of America for reprinting it so that we could share it with a wide audience.

We'd like to hear from and exchange ideas and support with others who share the vision we have tried to describe.

The Staff
The Day Care Consultation Service
Bank Street College of Education
610 West 112th Street
New York, New York 10025
(212) 663-7200

October 1974.

The central mission of a day-care model is not to promote a particular caregiving arrangement but rather to conceptualize a set of procedures needed to develop optimizing environments in the home, playground, center, and school. We can conceive of a day-care model that could be realized with an office and several telephones and a "natural" child-care staff of hundreds who would work with children in homes and neighborhoods, learn about children in local high schools and colleges, and utilize parks and playgrounds, museums, movie theaters, stores, and firehouses. A day-care model deals with what happens when a caregiver, a child, and a resource come together. Any particular model can have an unlimited number of concrete realizations, and it can include components that consider the special features of different types of caregiving arrangements.

Greta Fein and Alison Clarke-Stewart
Day Care in Context; New York: John Wiley, 1973, p. 192.

I. DAY CARE AND THE FAMILY

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It is useful to begin this discussion by contrasting the organization and the operations of a narrowly defined day care center with the organization by which a hypothetical family manages its daily life.

Our family will be called Antrobus.* Both parents work to support their three children, ages 13, 8 and 4. They are white, low-income, registered Democrats, who do not attend church regularly.

The Antrobus family operates as a highly complex multi-purpose organization which has as its goals survival and at times conviviality. This family organization undertakes to meet a wide range of needs for itself and its members -- nutrition, housing, income maintenance, health, education, recreation, companionship, care for the elderly, and child care.

The Antrobus organization is complex. It reflects their aspirations and uses the resources the members can find within themselves -- especially Mrs. Antrobus, who works hard all day and then comes home to cook dinner for five and clean up the house -- and the resources they can find outside the family.

An especially valued part of the Antrobus organization is the Antrobus Child Care System (ACCS). When Mrs. Antrobus has time to stop and think about it, she is especially proud of how well the ACCS usually functions.

*The name "Antrobus" is a reference to the Antrobus family in The Skin Of Our Teeth by Thornton Wilder. What Wilder was saying was that our day-to-day relationships with each other and life are among the most significant of human activities.

The Antrobus Child Care System includes:

1) A day care center for the four-year-old.

2) An elementary school for the eight-year-old

3) A junior high school for the thirteen-year-old.

It also includes:

4) The thirteen-year-old Antrobus who "looks out" for the eight-year old after school.

5) Friendly neighbors, one of whom will always be there as a back-up system in case the thirteen-year-old is kept after school, or who for a small fee will take a mildly sick child for a day (although Mrs. Antrobus herself misses work if the illness is just starting or is serious).

6) Provisions for night-time, week-end, and short-term child care services by parents, siblings, relatives, friends, babysitters, and others.

7) And finally, as an important but -- gratefully -- little used part of the ACCS, Mrs. Antrobus knows that her neighbor would come over to watch the children at anytime, even in the middle of the night, if something should happen and Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus had to rush to the hospital in an emergency.

This hypothetical family child care system would not be much less complicated had we chosen a smaller family, or for that matter, a family in which the mother was not employed. What is important to point out, however, is that a family's child care system is part of, not separable from, its total organization for the management of life, the organization that reflects their resources and their aspirations. But what is most important is that the day-to-day arrangements and relationships by and through which a family manages its life and the lives of its members is a statement of their existence. It reflects their values, their culture and history as well as their resources and their aspirations for the future; it is an affirmation.

It is important to note that "day care" is not the sum total of their Child Care System.

1) To the extent that a day care center limits its function to the care of pre-school children during the "normal," or presumed, hours of work, it becomes a smaller and smaller piece of the family's child care system.

2) To the extent that a day care center limits its concerns and services to pre-school children and not to the other members of the family, it becomes a still smaller part of the outside resources of the total family organization, and less relevant to the family's efforts to meet its many other needs.

From this point of view, it is easy to see why parents "don't get involved" in their children's day care centers, and why "they don't come to meetings" to learn about the educational program offered by the day care center.

The staff members at the day care center -- both professional and non-professional -- have been required by the government to involve parents in the center's program. They know and believe that parents should be involved in what goes on in the classroom, and they have put a significant amount of time and energy into their "parent involvement program."*

The concerns of the staff members focus almost entirely on what goes on in the center and the classroom, not on the total family, and not on creating meaningful dialogue between the program and the family.

*And these are only "parent" involvement programs; older siblings, relatives, and others who do a great deal of child rearing are seldom invited in to become involved.

When a staff member or family counselor does a "home visit" (and most do not), the purpose of the visit is to get the family involved in the center, not to explore ways by which the center's program or resources could support more of the family's child care system or support other aspects of the family's total life.

This solipsistic classroom orientation is part of the reason why day care staff members so often come to the conclusion that parents -- especially poor minority group parents who may be culturally different from the staff members -- are apathetic or don't care about their children.

The staff members cannot acknowledge or express respect for the human energy and love that goes into constructing and maintaining a family's complex child care system, because they know nothing about it.

Too often, however, the staff members do express their lack of respect for the parents and families who, they have concluded, don't care about their children.

When the staff members' conclusions are associated with prejudices such as classism, racism, or sexism, the result is a devastating breakdown of communications and most often another "put down" of the members of a poor minority family, their culture, their history, their resources, and their aspirations for the future.

In this way, narrowly defined day care programs become isolated from the total life and development of the child in the family, the community, and society. And in this way, benign isolation becomes destructive and debilitating fragmentation.

The Antrobus Child Care System is unusual. Mrs. Antrobus has lived in her neighborhood long enough to have established the kinds of helping relationships she needs to know that she can count on her neighbors - and what she can count on each of them for. If Mrs. Antrobus lived in a less stable community - such as Brownsville in Brooklyn where elementary schools have a yearly pupil turnover of close to 100% - she would not have the opportunity to form such relationships with her neighbors.

The ACCS includes a day care center. There are 6 million working mothers of children under six. But there are fewer than 905,000 places in licensed day care centers. The Antrobus child occupies one of these scarce places.

Mrs. Antrobus is not a single parent. Her husband and her oldest child are important parts of the ACCS. Her job allows her some flexibility of hours. Her employer understands that she has to miss some work days when one of her children is sick, and she is not always docked when that happens.

Mrs. Antrobus is proud of the ACCS, but she knows it is a house of cards. She has seen it collapse through sickness, missed connections and misunderstandings.

Mrs. Antrobus doesn't often think about the ACCS because she is very busy. She is proud of the ACCS, but there are other times that she has found that thinking about it can be an unpleasant experience. In fact the ACCS seems to fill Mrs. Antrobus' life with contradictions.

To begin with, Mrs. Antrobus feels that both she and her husband must work because they have three children. But she also feels that because she is the mother of three children she shouldn't be working at all, and that by doing so she is somehow not "doing right" for her children, family or society. It is a conflict that nags at her daily and disturbs her sleep.

There are times when Mrs. Antrobus feels that she knows what's best for her children, but she feels helpless to do anything about what she knows, and uncertain about whether or not she's right.

When Mrs. Antrobus does think about her child care system, two incidents keep coming to mind, two nagging, somehow embarrassing memories.

When she had first gotten her job and was enrolling their youngest child in the day care center, Mrs. Antrobus was greatly troubled about whether or not she was doing the right thing for her child. Luckily, she wouldn't have to be at her job each day until ten o'clock. So, she decided she would plan her day so she could spend extra time alone with her youngest child in the morning.

But it never worked out that way. The teachers in the day care center had a rule that all children had to arrive before 9:15 a.m. Mrs. Antrobus didn't know why the teachers had made the rule, nor what the penalty would be if the rule were broken, and she had never asked. She thought the teachers ought to know what they were doing. The center was a nice-looking place, and the only one in the neighborhood. Mrs. Antrobus felt the teachers must be doing the right thing, but she also felt she had somehow let her child down by spending less time with her than she might have.

The second incident that keeps coming back happened several years ago. Her oldest son had been shifted from the sixth grade class - the group of children he had known since kindergarten- to a more advanced group. Everyone was proud, but she felt it was a mistake. She could tell that her son wasn't happy. But when she talked to the principal about her concern, he argued that she was being over-protective and her "mothering" was getting in the way of her own son's academic advancement. She keeps remembering that conversation with the principal, not sure that she believed him then, not sure that she believes it now.

One night a few months ago, Mrs. Antrobus was tucking in her youngest child, a daughter aged four. On the way out of the bedroom, Mrs. Antrobus paused to gaze at the sleeping child. She wondered what life would be like for her in fifteen years, and suddenly Mrs. Antrobus found herself struck with a deep sense of loneliness and helplessness.

Standing there in the darkened bedroom gazing at her sleeping child, Mrs. Antrobus was suddenly certain that she and her husband were the only people in the whole world who would look at her child and ask themselves that question.

Mrs. Antrobus is white, with a low income. She and her husband know they are feeding and clothing their children. Yet society leaves Mrs. Antrobus very little room to enjoy thinking about her children. However, she still can gaze at her sleeping child and ask herself about her child's future.

There are millions of poor, minority parents of millions of other sleeping children for whom the question itself is a luxury. And many of them know that if they could ask it the answer they would find would be that the future will be the quiet desperation of today.

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TODAY'S CHILD CARE PROBLEMS

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TODAY'S CHILD CARE PROBLEMS

There is much momentum in the movement toward the care of children in day care centers. Our nation's child care needs are great, but they will never be met adequately by day care centers alone. In order to understand this momentum and to conceptualize the variety of possible solutions to our child care needs, it is necessary to understand the limitations of the day care center as an institution -- to trace its origins and significant changes -- and to review the more informal kinds of child care that have historically and still co-exist with the day care center.

Today's debate often sounds as if day care centers are the wave of the future which -- if progress prevails -- will soon blot out antiquated modes of child care. This should not be the direction we take. The qualities of intimacy inherent in many of the informal kinds of child care must be joined with day care centers. Not only are these kinds of child care often desirable alternatives to center care, they in fact may provide the keys to ways in which centers can preserve and foster intimacy.

A. Origins of Today's Day Care Center

The web of today's early childhood education offerings in the United States comes from three disparate historic strands, still identifiable in current terms as day care, kindergarten, and nursery schools.

The first day care and the first kindergarten in the United States can each be traced to the mid-nineteenth century,* but they had different European parentage and were founded here for different reasons. The educational program known as kindergarten was named by Froebel, a man who thought young childhood should be happier than his own had been. German emigres set up the first kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1856; the first English-speaking kindergarten was opened by Elizabeth Peabody in Boston in 1860.** The program of play activities for the educative growth of young children spread quickly in America in the 1850's and 1860's, often as a part of public or private elementary schools.

The first nursery was opened by Margaret McMillan in England in 1911, in a heavily industralized slum area of London. Health studies had found 80 per cent of English children were healthy at birth, but only 20 per cent were healthy when they entered school. That the goal was education as well as good health is shown by the fact that she named it a "nursery school."*** Nursery schools spread rapidly in America about ten years later, with Freud, Gesell, Montessori and Dewey as their sources of educational philosophy. They were closely allied intellectually with progressive education, and a number of progressive elementary schools encompass

*There were instances in the United States of schools for young children even before the 1850's: Robert Owen's infant school in New Harmony, Indiana, of 1825; and infant schools in New York and Boston in 1827 and 1828. These, however, seem to be "Leif Erickson" ancestors -- no continuous development from these foundings -- as opposed to the "Christopher Columbus" foundings of kindergarten and day nurseries in the 1850's, which took root and were widely copied immediately after the first experiments.

**Carroll Atkinson and Eugene T. Maleska, The Story of Education. New York: Bantam Books, 1962, p. 138.

*** A quotation from, "Nursery Schools Fifty Years Ago," Young Children, XXXVII, 4, 1972, p. 209.

nursery classes as well as the grades: the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, founded by John Dewey in 1896, and the New York City schools we now know as City and Country, Walden, and Bank Street School for Children, all dating from the World War I era.* Others were free-standing schools only for children over two years but under five. Abigail Adams Eliot, a pioneer in nursery schools, reports that "Many of the early nursery schools served the same socioeconomic group as do the present-day Head Start programs," such as her own Ruggles Street School in Boston and Merrill-Palmer Institute in Detroit.**

The middle class, however, quickly adopted nursery schools for their own children, and created a variant, the parent cooperative nursery school: the first was created by University of Chicago faculty wives in 1916, and California especially has many cooperatives that have existed continuously for decades.***

The schedule of kindergarten and nursery school was set by educational goals, and, despite their rhetoric of serving the whole child, both assume that a child will spend much of his waking hours and receive most of his meals at home. Both are now institutions geared largely to the middle class family of two parents, one of whom (male) earns the family's living, and the other (female) who maintains the home and has primary responsibility for the children.

*Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961, p. 135 ff. Also Cornelia Goldsmith, Better Day Care for the Young Child Through A Merged Governmental and Nongovernmental Effort: The Story of Day Care in New York City. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1972, pp. 86-87.

**Eliott, "Nursery Schools," pp. 211-12.

***Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Parent Cooperative Nursery Schools. New York: Teachers College, 1954, p. 3.

The day nursery was created on the model of the French creche, and was concerned with the physical care of the children of working mothers; usually widows, deserted wives or wives of drunkards or other deficient fathers. The first day nursery was opened in Boston in 1838 to care for the children of seamen's wives and widows,* and a hospital opened the first New York City nursery in 1854 to care for children of former patients who had to work and for the babies of wet nurses -- children who often died for lack of sufficient milk.** Founded to assure the survival and protection of young children, day care is still so linked in the public mind with mere custodial care that, as late as 1972, the U.S. Office of Education did not include day care children in its census of early childhood education.*** Unlike the kindergarten and the nursery school, no theoretical godparent for the day nursery is cited by the historians.

The day nursery movement developed rapidly after the Civil War in response to the large influx of immigrants and the industrialization and urbanization of society. The day nursery was often described as a "temporary expedient which, with improving economic and social conditions, would naturally be phased out of existence."**** They were to provide an alternative to institutionalizing poor, homeless or unsupervised

*Virginia Kerr, "One Step Forward -- Two Steps Back: Child Care's Long American History," in Pamela Roby, ed., Child Care -- Who Cares? New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 158.

**Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children? The History and Politics of Day Care in America. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973, p. 36. Compare Kwashiorkor (African), malignant malnutrition; literally, the disease of the child whose mother has had a baby; the toddler wastes away when the mother nurses the infant. Also Goldsmith, Better Day Care, pp. 80-81.

***Linda A. Barker, "Preprimary Enrollment October 1972," National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Publication No. (OE) 73-11411, p. 1.

****Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 50.

children, and to enable poor mothers to gain employment -- until women would be restored to their proper place in the home.

Staffing was at first minimal:

> The Wayside Day Nursery in 1884 had a matron and two assistants who were 14 years of age. The three performed all of the work of the nursery, including "washing and breadmaking, except during the summer months." Their day began at 6 A.M. when they lit the fires, and ended at 9 P.M. when they banked them; from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. they cared for about sixty children.*

What is striking about them is how many of today's "pilot projects" were within the scope of at least some of the early day nurseries: long hours, weekend care, infant and after-school programs, care of sick children, "drop-in" options, emergency coverage for a sick mother, parent education.**

The differences in length of the day for day nurseries and for nursery schools was not as great in the early days as it is now, as many early nursery schools were open at least as long as the grade schools. Miss Eliott says that "The difference between a 'day nursery' and a 'nursery school' is largely one of motive.... Parents placed their children in nursery schools for the sake of their children, not just because they needed a place where a child could stay during the day... Day nurseries were really for parents: nursery schools were for children."***

*Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 46.
**Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 42.
***Eliott, "Nursery Schools," p. 211.

The peak of the day nursery movement appears to have been about 1910-1920. By 1921, there were 600 day nurseries across the country, with 110 in New York City and "Some 40,000 of New York's children of the poor were served in this way."* The 1920's ushered in great changes in the day nursery. First, with small quotas imposed on immigration, there was a drop in enrollments and waiting lists; some day nurseries closed entirely when fund-raising became more difficult in the Depression. Second, a growing concern that day nurseries meet standards under voluntary and then government regulations; at the beginning there were only safety and space limits. But, third, professionalism changed the staffing, with nursery attendants being replaced by trained teachers and the day nursery's "friendly visitor," who had often been a volunteer member of the board, being replaced by trained social workers.

The large influx of professionally trained teachers and social workers into the day nurseries had two important consequences. The first was to limit the ages of the children who were cared for. "From the 1920's on, the presence of infants and younger children came to be considered inappropriate. This happened not because the need for such care had passed but because the new personnel of the day nursery were not prepared to care for them"** -- specifically, not prepared to change babies' diapers and toilet-train the toddlers.

The second change, accompanying the rise of professional social work, was that day nurseries found themselves with a new public image -- "a custodial and undesirable

*Goldsmith, Better Day Care, p. 82.
**Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 59.

service for women and families who were not normal." Day nurseries had become a form of "treatment," or intervention into, socially pathological families. The early attitude was one that -- in the extreme -- meant "a nursery prided itself on never refusing an applicant"; it became one where the social worker would refuse to admit a child: "Leaving the office after an intake interview with the Day-Nursery case-worker, Mrs. Santo sputtered: 'I guess I know my own business best. She can refuse my baby if she wants to. But telling me to stay at home is too much!'* The put-down that Mrs. Antrobus senses was already coming down on mothers in the 1920's.

The entrance of social workers into day care was prophetic, as the association of day care with family pathology came to characterize the rationale for all federal (and most state) funding for day care programs and services, and indeed most early childhood programs. The federal legislation has been drafted on the assumption that "normal, socially healthy" families do not need child care, and that there is something "wrong" with families who do. But it is the affiliation of day care with case-work, not public funding, which stigmatized day care. Public funding has not so stigmatized elementary, secondary or higher education.

The greatest growth of day care prior to World War II was on the nursery school, not the day nursery, pattern. This growth had as its impetus, not so much the needs of children nor necessarily the absence of the mother from the home, as the great unemployment of teachers in the 1930's. The Works Progress Administration created nursery schools of which "all personnel, including teachers, cooks, nurses, nutritionists, clerical workers, cooks, and janitors, were to come from the relief rolls. By 1937

*Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, pp. 62 and 64.

40,000 children were being cared for under the program, which is still considered by professionals to have provided excellent health and nutritional care as well as education."* Funds were channeled through state departments of education, not departments of welfare, and nurseries were usually located in public schools.

World War II made it patriotically acceptable for mothers of young children to work. The Lanham Act (Community Facilities Act of 1941) was passed by Congress "to meet on a fifty-fifty basis the social service needs of war-impacted areas,"** and more than 1100 of the 1500 WPA nurseries were continued as day care centers under this financing. "In July, 1945, more than a million and a half children were in day care" in 2800 centers.**

> Despite pleas by social workers to make casework and family day care eligible for the funds, the agency ruled that these were not considered public works and were, therefore, ineligible for funding. The drawback to the fact that the agency had been concerned primarily with supplying labor for war industries was that no standards had been set for day care services, and the care provided was wholly supervised by local groups who had agreed to sponsor the centers. The quality of care, therefore, varied considerably. After the war, it was this factor that led social welfare forces to look upon the wartime day care centers as a disaster quickly done away with and, hopefully, never to be repeated.***

Postwar demobilization of day care centers was as rapid as demobilization of the Army, and substantial federal funds were not again invested in day care until the Social Security Amendments of 1967. However, a few localities continued their programs

*Kerr, Child Care -- Who Cares?, p. 162.
**Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 67.
***Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 67.
****Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children?, p. 68.

with local tax support: the states of California, Washington and Massachusetts, and the cities of Washington, D.C., Hartford, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York City. In fact, the long-run trend after the war was for increasing numbers of women to be employed outside the home, including the mothers of children under six: in 1950, one and two-third million mothers of children under six were working; in 1960, it was three and one-third million, and by 1972, it was six million working mothers of pre-schoolers. While the number of working mothers increased by the millions, all through this period the number of places in day care centers numbered only in the hundred thousands -- 185,000 in 1963, 625,000 in 1970, 905,000 in 1973. This was only a fraction of the World War II capacity. The states and cities that kept their modest tax-funded day care programs had read the trends better than had the national government.

The effort in California, Washington, D.C. and New York City was to create small day care systems exempt from larger national trends and federal legislation. However, in the late 1960's, as these day care systems applied for the matching funds available under the Social Services Amendments to the Social Security Act, they once again became accountable to federal policy. And they, like the day care systems only newly created with these federal funds, found themselves with centers which were part of the national welfare system, clearly oriented toward "treatment" for family pathology. This has also produced an easily corruptible day care systems which the federal government now seeks to operate primarily as a support for welfare "reform" programs, not as a support for children and families.

The association of day care with social pathology and with employment, rather than with child-rearing, generally has become an important tradition has given day care a welfare image, distasteful to a large portion of the population.

The association of day care with pathology is rebutted by some of the professionals. Florence Ruderman argues that "Day care is for normal children from normal homes," and urges that admission to day care be independent of social casework:

> Mothers on all class levels work for diverse and complex reasons; in itself, the decision to work should not be seen as calling for case-work evaluation; and programs directed to working mothers should not be formulated in terms of problem cases. These are a minority and should not obscure the totality.*

And certainly the spate of new parent cooperative day care centers, often built on strong feminist underpinnings, do not consider that a mother's need for day care is pathological.**

Today, day care has become an uneasy amalgam of the day nursery and the nursery school.

Unfortunately, this amalgam has too often resulted in distortions of both the original institutions, rather than a combination of their strengths. Too often, day care is not viewed in the total ecology of the child's life and development, but rather as a therapeutic solution both to the family's pathology and to the child's cognitive deficiencies. The day care centers that the professionals point

*Florence Ruderman, Child Care and Working Mothers: A Study of Arrangements Made for Daytime Care of Children. New York: Child Welfare League, 1968, p. 339.
**See Elizabeth Hagen, "Child Care and Women's Liberation," in Child Care -- Who Cares?, pp. 284 ff, and references.

o with pride are like ten-hour nursery schools, while they criticize many centers as substandard, that is, low ratios of staff to children, not employing licensed teachers, not following an educational curriculum. Those who wish to improve the majority of day care centers become preoccupied with classroom planning and programming.

It seems highly likely that this preoccupation with classroom programming and curriculum has often distracted people's attention from the other important factors -- such as the role of parents in the center and in child rearing, the purposes of the legislation through which a program is funded, or the administration of a program or center -- which also have significant impact on the quality of experience a center can offer children and families. Thus a narrow, inward-looking classroom orientation contributes to the separation that is so often found between what happens in a day care center and what happens to children in all the rest of their lives and experiences in the family, community and larger society.

B. Historical and Contemporary Alternatives to Center Care

Most of those concerned for children of working mothers define the problem as how few children are in licensed day care centers. It appears that the only time a substantial proportion of the under-six children of working mothers were in federally funded day care centers was during World War II, and "it has been estimated that the Lanham centers could not have served more than 40 per cent of the children in need of care."* Today perhaps 10 per cent are in private and public centers together, while only five per cent of economically disadvantaged children are in federally funded day care.**

Almost all voices deplore that the vast majority of children are not in licensed programs, and assume that all other arrangements are poor quality. Clearly, some arrangements do seriously neglect children: the Low-Spindler study in 1968 found at least 18,000 children under six were latch-key children.*** In addition to those who need care because their mothers are working, there are outright cases of child abuse, in numbers hard to fix, where a child -- and his or her overburdened parent -- would benefit from separation for substantial portions of the day.

What is proposed to meet these problems is group day care or its more respectable cousin "comprehensive child development programs." But what the recent proposed federal legislation called "comprehensive child care" was not comprehensive of the varieties of child care co-existing in this country. The proposed legislation merely called for greater numbers of narrowly conceived day care centers to provide a more

*Kerr, Child Care -- Who Cares?, p. 163.
**Mary Dublin Keyserling, Windows on Day Care. New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1972, p. 2.
***Seth Low and Pearl G. Spindler, Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers, Children's Bureau Publication No. 461-1968, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1968.

comprehensive range of specialized services to a greater number of individual children.*

As a nation, from the President on down, we think in a false dichotomy: either children are at home in the full-time care of their own natural mothers, or they are in centers in group care. This involves us in the false strategem of denying adequate support to large numbers of centers that do exist, on the premise that this will automatically mean that mothers will stay at home with their children. In truth only some will do so. Others who feel impelled to work -- either through economic necessity or career dynamics -- will find some arrangement (or patchwork of arrangements) to enable them to leave their child for the working world.

The discrepancy between the title and the subtitle of a new book is an illustration: Who's Minding the Children? The History and Politics of Day Care in America. Its subject is in fact the nineteenth century day nursery and its present-day successor, rather than the myriad of arrangements that working mothers use for the supervision of about 90 per cent of the children of working mothers. In other words, it is not about who, in the majority of cases, is truly minding the children.

Most children of working mothers are cared for in their own home by their father, some other relative or a paid person while their mothers are at work (47 per cent found by Low and Spindler; 59 per cent found by Ruderman). The second most prevalent arrangement is care in the home of a neighbor or relative. What few of the studies discriminate is the degree to which parents are satisfied with the arrangements they have in and around their home, and whether thoughtful

*While the "Child Care and Family Services Act of 1974 - S.3754" currently under consideration would provide funds for a wide range of child care arrangements and services, it will take a major effort of rethinking and work within government, the professions, and the child care movement to make the most possible use of the bill - in support of a family-centered comprehensive system. The Authors - October 1974.

professionals can endorse these parental satisfactions.

Those who are trying to put our problem in perspective are increasingly pointing out to us that the expectation that the natural mother will be the sole and full-time care-giver of a child was due to an atypical combination of factors of prosperity in the United States and Canada and some Western European countries, that allowed us to indulge in a luxury:

> The later 1940's and 1950's were simply a period in which socio-economic conditions -- a labor market in which neither government nor industry employers perceived a need for recruiting more female employees, the virtual disappearance of domestic service as an occupation, and economic affluence which allowed the majority of the big new families to be supported by the husband's income, along with the persuasive arguments of Bowlby and others about the dangers of maternal deprivation -- were all consistent with stay-at-home mothers. Or to put it another way, there were no strong trends, such as a labor shortage, that went against the American preference for young children to be cared for in their own homes by their own mothers.*

This relative prosperity could be achieved by half the white families on the income of the father alone. Today, half the families in New York City earning over families to have both parents at work to achieve $8,000 or more** The post World War II housing policy, favoring single-family houses in the suburbs over multiple dwellings in the inner cities, probably had as much to do with isolating the mother with her four, three, or two children at home as did any deliberate policy toward children themselves.

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*Sarane Spence Boocock, "A Crosscultural Analysis of the Child Care Syste," A report of research supported by U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Child Development Grant No. OCD-CB-227, 1973, p. 45.

**Georgia L. McMurray, lecture at the New School for Social Research, December 13, 1971.

The phenomenon was one characterizing the white, middle class family. But it was not always so even with them. Sarane Boocock cites recent studies that illuminate how household structure has changed over time:

> The three-generation model that we tend to romanticize in our present dilemma was never as common as most people think, partly because until recent times, few people lived long enough to form long-term three-generation groups, and partly because with the exception of a few atypical periods in history, the aged have normally been considered a burden to their young relatives. Moreover, the three-generation family, where it did exist (e.g., among the wealthy in pre-communist China) was a stifling environment for many of its members (females and the young in particular). What households of the past were more likely to contain were apprentices, servants and other persons not necessarily related by blood. They were also more likely to contain the male head of the household for longer periods of time, since his work was often in or near the home.*

When both parents work, or one parent in single-parent families, a relative or someone outside the family must provide care for the children. For most preschool children, child care has been provided by relatively complex constellations of kith -- those people to whom one is linked by bonds of obligation, friendship and proximity, but not blood relation -- and kin, relatives including older siblings of young children.**

Alice Collins and Diane Panconst, writing about "natural helping networks" and child care by kith, point out that:

> There is considerable evidence that the support of kith is assuming more importance for many people as the extended family becomes less available. It may be that people are making use of a greater variety of helping relationships with friends, neighbors,

*Boocock, "Crosscultural Analysis," pp. 12-13; author's italics.

**After passage of a compulsory school law in 1910, California found it necessary to provide public-school nurseries for young children in order to cut down the truancy of the older siblings (Kerr, Child Care -- Who Cares?, p. 159).

acquaintances, professional and paraprofessional helpers, and perhaps assign these relationships more specialized functions than was true in the agricultural village.*

These informal but complex arrangements by which most children are cared for while their parents work do appear to have changed in their nature over recent decades. Day care economists Mary Potter Rowe and Ralph Husby state that "child care arrangements appear to be for increasingly longer hours; they occur more and more frequently outside the home and are more generally paid for in cash now than in 1965; in 1971 formal arrangements are also more common than in 1965."** Thus there appears to be a trend toward monetization; informal child care arrangements by kith through barter and obligation is being converted into money agreements.

It is difficult to determine what this trend means to the lives of children. Certainly it may indicate a changing attitude toward child rearing in society, an attitude toward child rearing as a specialized function increasingly separate from the traditional domains of kith and kin.

*From an unpublished draft manuscript, "Natural Helping Networks" by Alice H. Collins and Diane L. Pancoast which is most helpful. The definition of "kith," above, is also from this source.

**Elizabeth Rowe in Child Care: Who Cares, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 99.

III. NEEDED: COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY CENTERED APPROACHES TO CHILD CARE

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Americans tend to think that the family is the cornerstone of our society, and that the society is supportive of families. Congress is very loath to legislate directly on matters affecting children and family life because it would breach the privacy of the home. Yet much federal legislation does have impact on family life -- indirectly and directly.

The result is that there is federal legislation that does in fact affect families, but because legislation is not evaluated first for its potential impact on families (in the way that potential environmental impact is studied prior to commitment to large projects), the result is unintended and Senator Mondale has labelled it "mindless":

> My argument is that they (the Government) are involved in the wrong ways. They are damaging families, not deliberately, but in just sort of a mindless way. Through a whole host of policies, we interfere with, prevent and sometimes even paralyze families from doing their job...It's not neglect; neglect assumes that you've thought about the question. It's simply mindless.*

He cites the effect of offering welfare to fatherless children, resulting in the necessity for unemployed fathers to leave the home before the children get aid, and the effect of public housing and highway projects that destroy neighborhoods where "grandfather used to live down the street."

It is important to draw a distinction between federal policy, which is established by legislation, and social behavior, which describes what people do, not necessarily what Congress says they do. When behavior has changed, but there is not yet wide understanding of the extent of the changes, people may regard their own

*Interview by Nadine Brozan, The New York Times, February 26, 1974, p. 32.

behavior as a deviation from the norm when in reality it may be part of a wider norm. People's perceptions are affected by their experiences, their culture and by myth.

Our attitude toward working women provides an excellent example of the conflict between perceptions and reality. The myth is that most women stay home and raise children. In fact, the majority of all women, the majority of mothers of children under 18, and the majority of mothers of children under 6, are employed. But because we do not have a general recognition of this fact, our attitude is that if a mother of young children works, she deviates from the norm of mothers, and the attendant problems of child care are for her to deal with uniquely and in isolation. We consider it her own obligation to arrange and pay for child care, not the obligation of the government, her employer nor the social welfare agencies of her community. It is only when she is very poor and considered to be a deficient parent that government or society provides her with assistance.

A further example of myth is the belief that the white family is strong and the Black family is weak, and the white family is the standard to which the Black family must be compared. Whether this is true is open to doubt. There seems to be some evidence that in fact the proportions of single-parent families and two-parent families are becoming more comparable among whites and Blacks. The rate of divorce is going up, so that more and more white families are headed by women as single-heads-of-household. There is also an increased tendency for white women to keep their babies born out of wedlock, rather than to put them up for adoption.

The internal evidence of a recent book, The Single Parent Experience,* is that it is dealing with a trend that is new, not absolutely as the author seems to think, but new among white women, although it has frequently existed in the past among Blacks.

Is there reason to cry in alarm that the white family is breaking down along just the lines that the Black families is considered deficient? Or, rather, should we not take cognizance of the ways in which Black families seem to be strong? Robert Coles is one of those who is impressed by the strength, not the weakness of Black families.** Should there not be attention to the institution of the "aunt" or grandmother, the non-mother female relative, and sometimes non-relative, who so frequently is responsible for child care while the mother works? And what about the exchange of children -- sending young ones to the South (or, in the case of Caribbean people, to the islands) to be raised in more rural surroundings, while young adults come North or to the cities, and stay with relatives or kith while they are students or getting started in jobs.

American social science seems to have a fixation on the strength-weakness image of only one kin relationship, that of marriage, that the relative strengths of other kinship ties seems neglected. The divorce rate might not seem such a disaster to the American family if we included within our professional interest other kinds of ties.

*Carole Klein, The Single Parent Experience. New York: Avon Books, 1973.
**Children of Crisis: A Story of Courage and Fear. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

The result of tying federally funded day care to welfare reform exclusively -- limiting it to families who are past, present or potential welfare recipients -- is the defeat of good day care in centers. Forces both from the outside and from within prevent centers from maintaining the vision they held for their centers.

Externally, government funding agencies, created by legislation and federal policy, respond to legislation and federal policy by imposing requirements: income-related eligibility requirements, or requirements about who can teach, or more subtle prescriptions about how staff should relate to families.

The government also requires the centers to measure the success of federal policy, and it is easier to measure achievement in terms of numbers of people, income and race than to measure in terms of the quality of the human experience. Thus people in the centers are required to count the number of parents who attended a meeting, rather than the quality of the experience it provided. Funding is determined by a required "full-time equivalent" enrollment rather than the growth and development of children.

The combination of federal policy and the tendency and requirements to measure achievement in terms of quantity rather than quality results in powerful pressures for day care centers to reflect society's dehumanizing values and goals. These are the powerful forces that attempt to destroy the vision people may hold for their center and to replace it with another vision. Fighting against these forces is often the most difficult part of operating a day care center.

Internally, the forces of discontent and corruption are manifested by the tendency toward institutionalization and bureaucratization. It is extremely difficult for institutions -- even small institutions like day care centers -- to continue to change, to re-evaluate, to love and to grow. Institutions tend to do the same thing, and to fall into the easy habits of non-caring patterns. In day care centers, these are the patterns of routine non-caring care for children that work well for the adults and ask no questions about children. The routine that comes with bureaucratization breeds discontent that clouds the vision of what the center might become.

The result of these conflicting forces on day care centers is to separate the way we organize our day care centers and child care programs from the way families organize their lives.

Another example of legislation not considered in advance for its impact on families and children is the new child care deduction, effective in 1972. Potentially, it affects every family with child care needs. However, since it is a deduction, not a tax credit, it will be used only by families whose incomes are high enough to warrant itemizing deductions. The child care deduction apparently resulted as a belated recognition on the part of the Congress that more mothers in the middle income range are working and are paying for child care, not arranging with grandmothers or other kith who might provide it free or by barter.

Second, the deductions are of different amount, dependent not on any basis of the qualifications of the caregiver nor the quality of the care, but on the location of the care: payments up to $400 a month are deductible if the care is given in the

home of the taxpayer, but if the care is out of the home, the monthly limits are $200 for one child, $300 for two, and $400 for three or more dependents. This difference rewards the family that prefers to hire poor women as domestic servants, and penalizes families who prefer to place their child in a school or center or home with a number of other children. It rewards, in fact, the situation where the person who cares for children is the weakest in terms of bargaining power vis-a-vis the parents. Was there a deliberate decision that this is in fact better for children or for those who care for children? Probably not, probably only a recognition that the family who is the exclusive employer of a caregiver will pay more than a family who share the cost of the caregiver with other families.

Third, regarding out-of-home care, the more children in a family, the less can be deducted per child for each one. For one child, the family may deduct $200 per month, but with two children they may only deduct $150 per month per child. For three children, they may deduct only $100 per month per child, and for more children it is even less. In fact, day care centers and nursery schools do not reduce tuition in this amount for additional children from the same family, although they may make some accomodation. Those who do make reductions for additional children of the same family are women who care for children in their own home.

Perhaps the differences in deductions for child care assume that Americans are just moving from unpaid child care provided by family members, such as a grandmother or an aunt, to paid in-home child care. In fact, of course, most American families are at least a generation away from that kind of unpaid care, if they ever had it. In that sense, these differences violate some of the possible good out-of-home solutions that families may have created. Those who set federal policy seem to be very remote from the actual social practices of families.

The effect of centering the national child care debate on whether or not to increase the number of day care centers has meant a neglect of alternative child care arrangements. A word should be said on the meaning of "alternative" in this context. If we speak of an alternative school, we know that it is alternative to the public school where the vast majority of American children are enrolled. The alternative school is a production of the counter-culture which has some resemblance to the institution it replaces, and alternative schools often have resemblances from one to the other.

But when we speak of alternative child care, it is a congeries of arrangements that families make, and because there are so few day care centers nationwide, it is not a deliberate departure from a majority institution.

Definition of Need

American child care takes many forms to meet many differing needs: licensed and unlicensed family day care, co-ops, playgroups, temporary baby-sitting arrangements, group homes, etc. Some of these arrangements serve children and their families well. Some do not. But because our country has not given high priority to supporting and strengthening the family--i.e. to supporting in some careful and systematic way those arrangements and services that promote cohesion, health, and productivity within the family--many of these arrangements do not even exist as real possibilities, much less satisfactory options, for families. These arrangements function haphazardly and in the dark: unknown to people who would like to use them or create them as possibilities, and unknown to those who make decisions about national policy affecting child care.

Nevertheless, the provision of child care in this country will increasingly depend upon the improvement, expansion, and stabilization of these varied arrangements in addition to or in conjunction with care in group centers. For if it did not produce large-scale federal funding to establish and run day care centers, the child development movement has, in concert with other human rights movements, produced a heightened consciousness about society's responsibility to child care. More and more people are looking for alternate ways to meet the child-care needs of their communities, though many don't know where to turn. Among other things, we need more information about:

(1) The non-formalized networks of sharing and caring, the relationships that families have developed to cope with their child care needs.

(2) Ways in which ongoing formal child-care arrangements (group day care, Head-Start, schools, etc.) can be linked with these networks to maximize and stabilize support to families.

(3) Ways in which an extended definition of responsibility about child care can lead the institutions in our society (universities, industries, etc.) to play supportive roles vis-a-vis child care.

To indicate some of the kinds of problems that are presented if we start from a family-centered point of view, we can cite some of the inquiries and problems posed to a neighborhood child care organization:*

*Pre-School Association of the West Side, New York.

A young mother wants to go back to work when her child enters kindergarten, and a neighbor downstairs is willing to have her come to her apartment for the afternoon. But the neighbor has an infant who is napping when Kindergarten is dismissed. Missing link: someone to escort the Kindergartener from school to apartment building.

A small group of parents want to operate a cooperative day care program and have found some space in an apartment building that would do: an unused laundry drying room. Missing link: the door that would open the room to the backyard of the building, thus giving children access to outdoor play space and satisfying the Fire Department on exit requirements.

Schools of education choose to place their student teachers with experienced teachers whom they judge will give good supervision. Result: student teachers are unavailable to just those programs where one additional "pair of hands" would make the most difference, such as the small children's group where there are not quite enough adults to escort the children on trips to the park.

A mother has been watching the children of three neighbors for many months, to their great mutual satisfaction. But when she has a sudden emergency -- her own or her child's illness, for example -- who is she to call on as a temporary substitute? Are three mothers to risk their jobs when their arrangement falls through?

Parents band together to open a nursery schools and hire a teacher. They agree to alternate in assisting the teacher, but they want some training so that they will share understandings of how to discipline the children and give the children a continuity of experience, despite the changing staff. Only a few places, notably California, make available adult education funds for this desirable training.

In a divorce settlement, a father receives the custody of his three-year-old daughter for one week out of four. He wants a nursery school that will allow her to attend on the week she lives with her father.

A husband and wife with a young child decide to use their apartment and yard to care for children of working parents. They succeed in attracting a number of families who are pleased with the children's activities. For some of the divorced women, the chance for their boy or girl to see an adult male consistently is one of the most desirable features. This couple has to charge enough for two adults and one child to live on (unlike some married women who only try to earn a small second income), so they keep losing a child or two when the mother finds something slightly cheaper. The couple could reduce their price somewhat if the group could get reimbursement for their food, a subsidy for which the children are eligible. Missing link: a legal

formula to make this small operation a tax-exempt agency in order to apply for the reimbursement.

A mother is hospitalized and the hospital social services department can't arrange a homemaker quickly. Will they have to place the three young children in several foster homes for the duration of the mother's treatment? Fortunately, one social worker tries a local Head Start director: is there a family who could take in the children temporarily? Fortunately, there is, but how many children are so lucky?

Clearly, there is no single formula that would solve all of these problems. In some cases, what needs to be changed is a federal guideline, but in many instances, the change needed is much more local and concrete. To start from a family-centered orientation would mean the child care programs themselves would engage in consciousness-raising about how to deal with problems their own programs present to families who try to enroll (or are already enrolled, when family situations change).

People want comprehensive child care. In some places -- inspite of mindless policy and restrictive government regulations -- community operated programs are providing aspects of comprehensive care. The majority of these efforts grow from visions based on intuition and faith in the capabilities of parent. People need help to articulate their visions. They need ideas, information, and support in their efforts to create programs which reflect a view of the predominant role of parents in child rearing. They need models of new and restructured institutions which will empower parents to assume that role and professionals to recognize it.

IV. TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACHES TO CHILD CARE

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We believe that two elements are essential for the development of child care programs and systems that reflect comprehensive, family-centered approaches. These are:

a. a broad concept of the role of parents as predominant in child rearing, and

b. new institutional arrangements and structures that enable and empower parents to assume such a role.

Although these two are discussed here separately, they are closely related and not easily separated in practice.

A. The Role of Parents

Parent participation in early childhood programs is most often described in terms of participation in classroom activities or in the governance of programs, and sometimes in terms of both. We believe that parent participation must be much more broadly defined in terms of how families live their lives and how they build and strengthen relationships of kith and kin.

The role of parents and family must be broadly defined as predominant in child rearing. Parent participation must be described as what programs must do to support child rearing, rather than, as is too often the case, what the parents must do to participate. Efforts to teach parents how to teach or rear their children are destined for failure unless they grow from a broad conceptual framework that includes support and respect for all the child rearing activities by all the members of the family.

Our concept of a more broadly conceived role of parents and of approaches to parent participation that reflect that role was developed through our work with and help from New York City centers, and with the help of others in other parts of the country who are developing similar approaches.

Two such programs have provided outstanding examples of sympathetic and sensitive approach to family day care. These are the Community Family Day Care Project at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California, and the Day Care Neighbor Service of Portland, Oregon, sponsored by the Tri-Country Community Council and Portland State University. Both these programs represent alternative ways of helping families meet their child care needs and therefore also provide examples of new institutional arrangements. However, both these programs are successful because they developed from a deep respect for the choices parents make, and for the role of parents as ultimately responsible for the total nuturing and raising of their children. Indeed, without such a view, these programs would not exist. Both programs focus on the relationship between parents and caregivers, on the importance of friendship, intimacy, and neighborliness.

Learning about these two family day care programs helped us to learn more about day care centers. At first glance, family day care and day care centers appear to be two very different institutions. However, from another point of view they operate from the same set of principles and can be surprisingly similar.

In "Child Care by Kith" Emlen, Donoghue, and LaForge describe family day care as:

> an emerging form of social relationship which substitutes for the extended family as a resource for supplementary child care. The relationship is not one of kinship but one between non-relatives who discover one another in the neighborhood. It is a relationship without a clear cultural blueprint. It is not bound by kinship

rules, yet it has some of the guidelines for relations between neighbors. It is a business relationship yet it may have an admixture of friendship or else it may be already existing friendship with which the business arrangement is admixed.*

The Pacific Oaks Project was an attempt, first, to study and understand the dynamics and interpersonal relationships in 24 family day care homes (half were licensed, and half unlicensed), and second, to develop ways of enabling family day care providers to improve the quality of care.** This is one of a small number of projects conducted by professional educators which concluded that not only was family day care "here to stay," but that it had great strengths, and that the most important question was how to support it. They pinpointed needs for "support for the special-needs child, financial support for Family Day Care Community Mothers, and an alternative to licensing"*** as the most essential issues requiring attention. Most important perhaps was the evidence that family day care homes could be intimate, nurturing, developmentally positive settings for young children, and that professional support could best be provided via family day care provider self-help groups.

The Portland Day Care Neighbor Service was developed in an attempt to view family day care as an example of a "natural helping system" of community, neighborhood, and kith. The Day Care Neighbor Service does not directly provide day care, it does not supervise day care, and it does not even require the day care consumer to make contact with an agency. The purpose of the service is to strengthen existing

*"Child Care by Kith: A Study of the Family Day Care Relationships of Working Mothers and Neighborhood Caregivers," Arthur Emlen, Betty A. Donoghue, Rolfe LaForge. Portland: Tri-County Community Council with Portland State University, 1974, p. 1.

**"Open the Door...See the People," June Solnit Sale, et. al. Pasadena: Pacific Oaks College, 1972.

***Sale, June, Ibid., page 224.

child care arrangements, recruit new day caregivers and facilitate the information and referral processes by which new arrangements are made.* The proponents of this approach maintain that natural helping systems can be found in any community, and that these systems are available to assist with a wide range of human problems and crises. Critical to an understanding of and the success of natural systems is to recognize that they grow from relationship -- and the ability of human beings to intervene in a way that does not dictate norms of behavior, but that tend to transmit psychological support and care, and to encourage individual health and growth.

We discovered that successful natural systems could be found in day care centers. Among the centers with which staff members of the Day Care Consultation Service have worked, both in New York City and elsewhere, some seemed to have been doing better than others. It was and still is difficult to describe what "doing better" means. Perhaps it is best described as a feeling, a Gestalt of caring, stability, warmth, and intimacy.

While "doing better" may be related to such variables as who controls the center or who funds the center, something else is keeping those centers from fading into the humdrum non-caring care for children which works well for the adults but asks no questions about children, about who they are and what they will become.

*This description is from "Matchmaking In Neighborhood Day Care" by Arthur Emlem and Eunice Watson. Corvallis: Continuing Education Publications, 1971, p. 1. The method and techniques of intervention used by the service have been more fully described in Alice H. Collins, Eunice Watson, "The Day Care Neighbor Service: A Handbook for the Organization and Operation of a New Approach to Family Day Care," Portland, Ore.: Tri-County Community, 1969.

These centers seem to have one thing in common: they all had other things going for them. They were all not only a day-care center for pre-school children. They were:

--a food coop
--a free elementary school
--accepting toddlers who weren't toilet trained
--accepting infants
--accepting handicapped children
--running after-school programs
--associated with and supporting family day care programs or components
--providing drop-in care
--bilingual/bicultural centers
--a babysitting pool

--a community information center on: welfare
housing
health
education
events

--involved in changing the public schools
--providing family health services
--offering new higher education opportunities through training for staff and parents.

The list could go on. But what is significant is not what they are doing in addition to offering day-time care for pre-school children, but that they are doing it. These additional programs and activities have grown from relationships within the centers. They were developed through people in the centers finding mutual solutions to their needs. They used their relationships to expand people's abilities to meet their families' needs and to expand kith.

These additional programs and activities were developed in spite of pressure from government to exist only as a narrowly defined day care center and even to eliminate all other aspects of the program.

Many centers have added additional programs and activities; they feel these additions are important, but they don't yet know why. We believe that if they understood how important relationships are to creating and maintaining all aspects of their centers, including the classrooms, it would be easier to continue to clarify and build for themselves ways by which kith relationships and mutual support systems could continue to develop, ways to resist government pressure that would stagnate and narrow the center, and ways to accomodate government requirements which do not destroy relationships. Thus, parent participation described as a kith-building activity has a broad political significance. It is an activity through which people can help strengthen and build the human relationships they need to help make life more enjoyable and less burdensome. However, these are also the relationships people need to break out of isolation, withstand oppression, and support and empower them in their efforts to take control of their own lives and the lives of their children.

B. New Institutional Arrangements

Most institutions that people identify as tools for benefiting or protecting people's welfare (such as schools, day care centers, hospitals, and governmental and private social agencies) tend to become tools for changing people or for defining what people's needs are. As services become institutionalized, they almost certainly become professionalized and specialized. For example, as "friendly visitors" become family case workers, day nurseries become day care centers for children aged three to five, so also does the institutional definition of need

become narrow and specialized.

In order to implement a broader role for parents and to support a constellation of child rearing activities, new institutional arrangements are required. Such arrangements must provide environments for practitioners and parents to share their viewpoints and understandings in mutually supportive ways. Without such environments and new arrangements, comprehensive child care will be difficult to achieve.

The professionalization and specialization of various aspects of child rearing have fragmenting effects on the efforts of families to rear their children in continuous, cohesive ways. This fragmentation ultimately devalues the role of the parent. When helping services are narrowly conceived and provided to individual family members by random specialists, they weaken, rather than strengthen, family and community ties, isolate individuals and make them more vulnerable to the control of institutions and government. When helping services are of this character, client (non-professional) and helper (professional) are divided and insensitive to one another. Whatever differences there may be between them in class, race or sex are exacerbated, which tends to perpetuate injustice and inequality.

In child care, when the definition of need adopted by a day care center begins to conflict with that of the family, an important separation occurs. What the center does for children becomes specialized and separate from what a family does. Teacher and parent are separated and polarized as provider and consumer, specialist and layperson. A broad view of the role of parents becomes increasingly difficult.

What family day care, in contrast to group day care in centers, seems to preserve is a unity of definition of need between the parent and the caregiver. In its more institutionalized set up, the day care center cannot be as flexible in hours and in age range. It is harder to satisfy the individual child's schedule for sleep, feeding, and toilet-training, or the care of a mildly sick or recuperating child. And especially when family day care is a private arrangement between parents and caregiver, there is almost certainly no judgmental element in accepting the family's statement that they do indeed need child care.

The new institutional arrangements that we are describing are attempts to create situations and environments in which the institutional specialists (teachers, doctors, and other providers of services) and the clients (children, parents and family members) can meet in mutually helpful ways. The purpose of these new arrangements are to enable the clients' needs to be broadly defined both by the specialists and by the clients themselves. This can happen in a day care center, for example, when parents and teachers can interact about their needs and the children's needs. Yet, as this proposal has pointed out, such dialogue and interaction is not only difficult to achieve within a narrowly conceived day care center, it is often prohibited. Such interaction is also impossible in a busy health clinic, which places responsibilities for care totally upon the doctors, and where all other activity is designed to bring together patient and doctor (and sometimes only symptom and doctor) for the most efficient treatment. What may be gained in narrow efficiency may be lost in total effectiveness.

These new arrangements include both new relationships between institutions, and new internal structures for existing institutions. The support and accrediting of the in-service training and B.A. degree programs at four day care centers by Bank Street College and other colleges is one example of a new relationship. An example of a new internal structure is reorganization of a day care center to make its structure and administration less hierarchical and to facilitate parent-staff interaction.

Within a day care center the administrative structure of the setting has enormous impact on the teacher-child relationship, the parent-teacher relationship, and on the curriculum. Yet teacher training institutions and most of society focus almost entirely on the teacher-child interaction and the curriculum, and almost not at all on the enormous influences of the organization and administration of the institution (the school or center) or the purposes of the legislation by and through which the institution (a center) is created and funded. Much of our work with board members, staff members, and parents from New York City centers will include helping them deepen their understandings and make the connections between administrative structure and curriculum, and to create new structures that facilitate relationship-building and expand opportunities for support by centers.

We believe that by working with community and parent groups and others who are already operating innovative programs, by helping them clarify their vision of what child care could be and should be, and to develop new alternatives, we can best use our experiences and resources to affect the development of new approaches, new programs, and new policies for child care.

In attempting to make comprehensive child care possible for families, new institutional arrangements and structures are important. They can support a broad view of the role of parents, and with parents in that role they can create the situations and settings in which people can strengthen and build human relationships. But most importantly these are also arrangements necessary to provide the information, skills, resources, and opportunities which enable people to better use their relationships to improve their lives and the manner by which they exercise control over their lives.