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ABSTRACT

The changing role of women in the family is discussed, and alternative policy options relevant to female-headed and dual-income families are identified. A model of family functions and an outline of the historical forces shaping family roles from preindustrial to present times are presented. The model indicates the typical allocation of nine family responsibilities to either husband or wife, displays current trends in allocation, and lists societal supports which supplement or supplant the responsibilities of the family. Areas of responsibility considered are health, protection, breadwinner, household, extra-family social, affective support, child nurturance, morality/standards, and child instruction. The shift in roles resulting from family crises involving handicapped and chronically ill children, unemployment, divorce, and absent fathers, is also discussed. Further discussion explores the influence of public policy on the family and the surrogate role of society in aiding the family. Concluding that child care is perhaps the weakest link in the model, the paper evaluates six alternative child care policy options for aid to dual-worker or single-parent families (public day care centers for all children, child care programs for poor and handicapped, child care vouchers to low income parents, negative income tax, industry supported child care, and tax credit) by five criteria: cost, vertical equity, political feasibility, preference satisfaction, and effectiveness. (RH)

# The Changing Status of Women and Family Roles

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# The Changing Status of Women and Family Roles

The role of women in our society has changed dramatically in the past 50 years in response to a variety of economic, political, and social influences. Previously the nuturant role of women was firmly based on the fact that women are the childbearers. This orientation has been altered by three convergent factors: pregnancy control leading to smaller family size; longer life expectancy; and higher female employment rates (Hoffman, 1974). The impact of these basic social changes has been heightened by such short-term factors as economic recessions and the fact that the United States has the highest rates of divorce in the world (Hetherington, 1979). The result is an unprecedented increase in maternal employment rates, a trend which is likely to continue into the 21st century.

There is widespread agreement that the institution of the American family is under a great deal of stress. The purpose of this paper is to examine the changing role of women in the context of the family and to identify specific policy options relevant to female-headed and dual-income families. We also present a model of family performance, including the allocation of responsibilities in the family, and outline the historical forces which have shaped these family roles from the preindustrial to the present period. Specific changes in women's roles, in child rearing duties, in the roles of husbands/fathers, and in the husband/wife dyad are highlighted. The shift in roles as a result of family crisis is also discussed. Based on our model of family performance, we then explore the influence of public policy on the family, and the surrogate role of society in aiding the family. Concluding that child care is perhaps the weakest link in the model, we present a "decision-matrix" for evaluating the means by which government can help dual worker or single-parent families fulfill their child care responsibilities.

For the purpose of this paper, we will speak of the family in generic terms, referring primarily to the traditional nuclear family (two parents and children) and to other family structures as variations of this model. We will not develop the discussion to include the impact of age and race, except to state that for teenage parents and for black families definitions of the family and the roles of family members are often broader and more complex than for white families. Race and age are relevant and important factors, but they do not significantly alter our major recommendations and are best handled in a more detailed analysis which is beyond the scope of this effort.

## A Model of Family Performance

When any institution as central as the family experiences change, that raises, in turn, the question of how social policy is influencing, or can influence, the stability and health of that institution. A useful first step in the analysis of changing family roles is to provide a model of family functioning which can be used as a basis for reviewing historical trends and analyzing current difficulties. The purpose of this model is to provide a basis for explanations and predictions on the nature of family and extra-family relationships.

## Model Assumptions

1. The family is a dynamic interacting social system designed so that individual members perform distinctive tasks and responsibilities that increase the likelihood of social adaptation to the larger society for each of the family members.

2. The allocation of responsibilities and duties changes as the partners age and as their children mature.

3. If there is chronic manifest dissatisfaction in the exercise of these responsibilities, the family system can dissolve.

4. If there is too much external or internal stress on the family, its members can become inefficient and nonfunctional.

## Allocation of Responsibilities

For the purposes of this model, the major functions and activities of the family are comprised of nine responsibilities that are allocated in a distinctive fashion by each family unit and its related social linkages. These functions are represented in Table 1, together with the typical allocation of responsibilities by the nuclear family and the societal supports which supplement or supplant these functions.

1. Health. One of the clear and continuing responsibilities of the family is to sustain the health of its members. This responsibility has rested primarily on the wife, although there are impressive social institutions outside the family that provide health services.

2. Protection. The family is responsible for protecting the physical safety of its members. As indicated in Table 1, these responsibilities have been mainly assigned to the husband. Much of that responsibility is delegated to the larger society through traditional protection agencies, such as municipal fire and police departments.

3. Household. There are a wide variety of responsibilities connected with maintaining a physical living space occupied by the family. These include food preparation and selection, laundry, maintenance of home and equipment, etc. The wife has traditionally had the major responsibility in this area, but in recent years, social pressure has been placed on the husband to assume some of these duties.

4. Breadwinner. Some family member, or collection of members, must bring in sufficient resources to allow other family tasks to be carried out effectively. An obvious current trend is for this responsibility to shift somewhat to the wife, although husbands still retain the major responsibility for family income.

6. Extra-family social. There are a variety of responsibilities representing the linkages of the family to the larger society. Such relationships can be organized in formal church activities, or in a

Table 1

Responsibilities of Family and Extra family Forces

| Area of Responsibility | Wife | Trend | Husband | Potential Assistance from Extended Family? | Societal Assistance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health | ■ | | ▨ | Yes | Medical and Health Services |
| Protection | ↘ ▨ | | ■ | Yes | Police and Fire |
| Breadwinner | ▨ | ← | ■ | Yes | Welfare Social Security |
| Household | ■ | → | — | Yes | Laundry, Servicemen |
| Extra-Family Social | ■ | → | ▨ | Yes | Social Clubs-Recreation Church |
| Affective Support | ■ | → | ▨ | Yes | Neighbors and Friends |
| Child Nurturance | ■ | → | ▨ | Yes | Daycare Centers |
| Morality - Standards | ▨ | | ▨ | Yes | The Law The Church |
| Child Instruction | ■ | | ▨ | Yes | Schools |

▨ Some Responsibility ■ Major Responsibility ↔ Trend

loose-knit network of friends. There appears to be a trend to include husbands in this role, though the major responsibility is still held by the wife.

6. Nurturance. Under this category are the responsibilities that include both sexual and emotional satisfaction derived from positive and supportive relationships. Current trends seem to place more responsibility on the husband than previously, though the major responsibility is still with the wife.

7. Child rearing. This role includes a variety of responsibilities ranging from selection of clothing, to teaching, to nursing, to providing continued support of the child through a long period of dependency. Although fathers may have recently increased their involvement in child rearing, the mother clearly takes the major responsibility now, as always.

8. Morality and standards. This role concerns responsibility for the spoken or unspoken rules of conduct followed by family members within and outside the family. There is often a shared responsibility with the father setting standards in the outside world and the mother setting standards within the family enclave.

9. Child instruction. One role of the family has always been the education of children so that they can take their role in the larger society. The schools obviously play a central role in this responsibility.

## The Surrogate Role of Society

One of the major functions of the larger society is to play a surrogate role in aiding the family in each of the above roles. As Table 1 indicates, the roles of health and protection of the family unit are often assumed by organized groups within the community such hospitals and police and fire departments. Under household there are a wide variety of services from cleaners to plumbers that will aid the family in performing those duties.

Under the breadwinner role, there are supplementary services, particularly for crisis situations, in the form of welfare payments, unemployment funds, and Social Security. Under extra-family social, there are a variety of social and community clubs, church functions, athletic events, theatre, etc., that provide organized opportunities for family members to become part of a larger social unit. Under the nurturing role the increased transportation and communications facilities of a modern society extend the opportunity for a variety of affective contacts which can bring support and satisfaction to the individual, while not always strengthening the family bonds. Under child rearing, institutions such as day care centers are available, though this service continues to be unavailable to many parents, or expensive when available. Although women have joined the workforce, the dilemmas of child rearing responsibilities are still unresolved.

Reinforcing family morality and standards are the major institutions of the law and the church. The extended family can be either of substantial help, or a source of pressure and stress. Potentially, extra-family members

who live within or nearby the family can be helpful in the areas of household maintenance, nurturance, and child rearing. In many ethnic groups the extended family can play a significant role in extra-family social activities. In some family units, older persons play the role of the "wise elder" on morality and standards and provide child rearing assistance as well. Some of these virtues and benefits are balanced off against the additional stress that comes from a potential lack of concordance in beliefs and techniques that some extended family members bring into the family unit.

Paradoxically, the more effective these surrogate services are to the family, the less likely that individuals are dependent upon large or extended families for survival. Nevertheless, societal and extended family support make it more likely that a single parent can provide the necessary support for other family members.

Another assumption of the model is that if there are major disagreements among the family members as to how the roles should be allocated or how well they are being conducted, such disagreements will lead to major tensions within the family. Table 2 indicates some expected relationships based on this model.

## Evolution of Family Roles in America

The model of family performance presented above highlights the complexities and opportunities of modern American family life. As we have noted, these complexities, coupled with rapid changes in family roles, can cause stress. Indeed, change appears to be stressful in its own right (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Toffler, 1971), and change is what the American family has been experiencing over the past century with the end of those changes not yet in sight.

These changes are a result of both internal and external forces. There has been a new balance of roles emerging within the family itself, as husband and wife reallocate responsibilities and expectations with regard to the roles noted in Table 1 (Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1976). There have also been major changes external to the family that have caused shifts in traditional roles within the family. For example, the existence of external social supports (i.e., health care, crisis support, unemployment insurance, etc.) has relieved some family members from previously held responsibilities.

The evolution of the American family may be best analyzed with reference to three eras: the pre-industrial (1690-1830), industrial (1830-1950), and post-industrial (1950-present). The pre-industrial era, notes Bell (1977), was primarily extractive. It drew resources from a rich environment, and was characterized by an economy based on agriculture, mining, fishing, and timber. The industrial era was primarily concerned with harnessing energy for the manufacture of goods. The economy of the post-industrial era is based on the processing of information in which telecommunications and computers are strategic for the exchange of information and knowledge; manufacturing will still exist, but it will demand skills different from those used in traditional "smokestack" industries.

Table 2

Family Model Relationships

1. The perception and expectations of the family members, rather than objective data, will determine the family tone of unhappiness/happiness (i.e., the adequacy of affective or breadwinner roles lies in the eyes of the partner).

2. The greater the dissatisfaction with the way responsibilities are allocated, the greater the potential for family disharmony.

3. The greater the disagreement with the allocation of responsibilities in the family, the more potential for family disharmony.

4. The greater the stress placed on the family unit (i.e., handicapped child), the more important become the potential resources of the extended family and society.

5. The importance of each domain to family harmony changes over different stages of family evolution.

6. The closer the perception of current and ideal performance of responsibilities by self and partner, the greater the personal satisfaction of the perceiver.

7. The more support is available in a particular domain from outside sources, the less important it is that the partner provides such support.

8. The more that support is provided by outside sources, the weaker the dependency bonds between immediate family members.

## The Pre-Industrial Period

The early colonial family was rooted in the European tradition of "chauvinistic" ideas and practices with respect to women. The tradition was authoritarian and clearly delineated the intellectual, social, and legal inferiority of women. English private law became the "common law" of the colonies. This common law set the man as the legal head of the household and as such gave him the responsibility of providing for his wife and children. His wife and children were property in every sense of the word: he owned his wife's and children's services, and he had the sole right to collect wages for their work outside the home; he owned his wife's personal property outright; he had the right to use or lease all his wife's real property and to keep rents and profits from it. Marriage resulted in the cancellation of the female's legal rights.

The woman, despite her inferior legal status, could still inherit property from a third party but it then became owned by her husband. Only upon death of the husband did the wife assume management of property. However, even under such legal jeopardy, women were very much a contributing family partner. They managed shops, taverns, inns, and stores. They worked alongside men in the fields. The colonial household was often a "little factory" that produced clothing, furniture, bedding, candles, and other accessories. Again, the female role was central. It was taken for granted that women provided for the family along with men. Survival would have been practically impossible if husband and wife did not share a division of labor based on specialization.

The family was responsible for jurisprudence, religion and ritual, learning, recreation, birth, and death. This situation of primary social need coupled with physical isolation bred a strong sense of family affiliation which was to endure for generations.

In summary, the role functions of men and women during this period were rooted in English Common Law, which clearly and legally sanctioned male superiority. The environment dictated that a division of labor be devised for survival, and these divisions of labor were sexually specific.

## The Industrial Period

There were several predominant social forces that led to the demise of the strong colonial family unit. The movement westward severed many family ties and traditions. Further, the rapid introduction and expansion of machines and resulting industry had several profound effects on the family. First, it changed the family from a producer mode to a consumer mode and simultaneously changed the work site for the male to a place outside the home. This resulted in the identification of gender with work site as well as with work itself, and the reduction of time for personal interaction and intimacy with the family (Goodsell, 1934).

Moving from an agrarian emphasis to the production of goods made the family thereafter dependent on the outside employment of its wage earners (Goodsell, 1934). It was at this evolutionary stage of the American family that "unit mobility" became an aspect of survival. Simply put, families had

to move to where jobs were available. This led to the expansion of cities and urban communities.

The acquisition of "material things" became a synonym for success and the protestant ethic of hard work called for a man who spent most of his time at work. "The man's chief responsibility is his job"; any family behaviors must be subordinate to it in terms of significance and (the job) has priority in the event of a clash (Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1976, p. 38). This definition of manhood has persisted into our present time.

Post Industrial Period

Social philosophers and sociologists have long posited that uneven rates of change cause disharmony, disunity, disorganization, and anomie (Bensman & Rosenburg, 1976). The upheavals of the twentieth century included two world wars, a depression, and a cornucopia of technological marvels such as the automobile, the telephone, radio, airplane, television, household appliances, etc. Each changed relationships within the family and between the family and the larger society.

During this period the "class structure became pronounced" (Goodsell, 1934). Men were judged by the level of living they provided; women by the children they produced and the home they provided. Men were judged by the myth "that endows a money making man with sexiness and virility, and is based on a man's dominance and strength, and ability to provide for and care for 'his' woman" (Bernard, 1981, p. 4). For a married woman to seek employment was an insult to her spouse.

The Great Depression and World War II had a tremendous impact on the development of male and female roles within the context of marriage. The Depression according to Bernard (1981) stripped many men of the essence of manhood--namely, being the family breadwinner. Added to economic instability were changing family roles since many wives sought available employment.

Changing Family Roles: Toward Women's Equality

A significant feature of the industrial-post industrial period is the changing family values which are largely a result of female employment outside the home. Family members today live with the legacy of these changes. Moreover, the lack of consensus on expected or approved role behavior has become a disruptive social force and a barrier to individual adaptation.

The acknowledgement and acceptance of a defined role is perhaps the most important feature of any society, because it establishes a repertoire of collective expectations. Roles specify one's probable behavior under specified conditions, and thus permit predictability in our behavior. Nevertheless, family roles are changing in ways which appear to be leading to female equality. We will review these changes discussing the evolution of the "working woman," child rearing practices, the husband/father role, and the husband/wife dyad.

The working woman. Many women are optimistic, in this era of shifting values, that multiple roles can be balanced (Shreve, 1982). Families are

seeking support of extra-family care for dependent others (children or the elderly). Support from significant others--spouses, friends, women's networks, and religious or ethnic groups--is being created. Indeed, some research suggest that, despite potential role conflicts, the employed mothers' feelings about themselves are more positive than negative (Feld, 1963).

These research results are remarkable when one considers that the standard, "a woman's place is in the home," remained largely unchallenged until World War II. While women through the ages have been employed in economic production, their work was largely carried out in, or near, the home. Following World War II, there was a major increase in the demand for personnel in occupations in which a preference for women employees has developed--teaching, nursing, and secretarial work (Oppenheimer, 1970). In recent years, however, several factors have contributed to even greater female employment, especially in nontraditional occupations. Reproductive choice, coupled with longer life spans, are especially significant factors. Importantly, reproductive activities--childbearing and child rearing--occupy a smaller proportion of the woman's life span. Historically, the mothering role has been a major factor in influencing the status of women in society; women were viewed as frequently and unpredictably pregnant. As women gained control of the timing and number of children they had, it became possible for them to work outside the home and to select employment which required continuing commitment. Further, among women who choose to devote their 20's to 40's to the traditional child rearing roles, there will still be at least three decades of living after the child rearing years (Hoffman, 1977).

Another stimulus to the changing values of women is the great importance Americans place on goods and services in contrast to leisure and nurturing activities. This emphasis on goods and services has assumed importance for family prestige and security as well as for the direct utility of these items. As a result, more women are influenced to seek employment as a method of increasing their families' level of consumption.

Still, the increased social acceptance of female employment has not always mitigated competing values in the lives of women themselves. Role conflict and the possibility of conflicting needs have generated a broad series of questions about the effects of a mother's working on the stability of marriage and the family. These questions also have become important because the growing proportion of working mothers was viewed as undermining the position of married women who decided against employment. Thus, shifting norms and values about "what women should be doing" became a focus of tension for individuals, for families, and for society.

Part of the conflict revolves around the personal traits required of women as achievers compared to those required as nurturers. Many of the women now caught in the career-mothering double bind grew up during the post World War II expanding economy which encouraged their mothers to stay home. Many of these women, in fact, simultaneously hold two conflicting standards: that child care, socialization, and the housekeeper roles constitute a full-time job and the desire to pursue ambitious careers (Shreve, 1982). As we will discuss later, this conflict presents several public policy questions.

Child rearing. Child rearing is perhaps the family role most vividly affected by the evolution of our society from agrarian to industrial, and from an extended to a nuclear family. Children are no longer an economic asset to the family. In fact, tne cost of raising a child causes many individuals to view child rearing as an economic liability in competition with other values (Brim, 1975).

As a result, fertility among American women has decreased. Birth rates declined about 38% during the two decades before 1979 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The higher birth rate that began after World War II was maintained until 1957. The post-war "baby boom" had been preceded by about 15 years of low birth rates during World War II and the preceding Depression. By the early 1970's, "total fertility" in the United States--the total number of children expected to be born to women during their lives--dropped below replacement level (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979).

Although the trend has been toward lower birth rates, by the end of the 1980's the number of children under 10 years of age is projected to increase by about 20% (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1982). As a consequence of changing views on maternal employment, these children are less likely to have a mother devoted exclusively to their care. And, unlike other areas of family life, society is not adequately serving as a surrogate in fulfilling this responsibility.

Similarly, mothers' labor force participation has increased dramatically since World War II. In 1947, about 19% of women with children were in the labor force; by 1980, this figure had increased to nearly 57%. Over half of all children--53%--have mothers in the labor force. One effect of increased maternal employment is the need for changes in the way families care for children. Recent data show that the majority of children are still cared for in their own homes with a parent as the caregiver. Yet, 5 million children aged 3 to 13 have mothers who work full-time and also function as the caregiver. Another 1.8 million children care for themselves while their mothers work (Children's Defense Fund, 1982). The increasing percentage of working mothers has created an unmet need for social structures (e.g., day-care centers and after-school care) to assist in child rearing responsibilities. Some research (e.g., Robinson, Yerby, Feiweger, & Somerich, 1976), however, indicates that as the father's breadwinner role is shared with the wife, he may participate more fully in the child rearing, nurturant, and teaching functions. Whatever the child-care arrangements, the general thrust of evidence is that there is a decrease in the proportion of time women spend in mothering (Hoffman, 1977).

Yet it is the employment of mothers which contributes to a more affluent (or less poor) life style for many children. As family income increases, children are more likely to have mothers in the labor force (Children's Defense Fund, 1982). The effect of this changing standard--from encouragement that mothers not work to acceptance of mothers' employment--stems from many sources and may have varying effects on the children themselves. While some mothers work for the rewards of competence, achievement, and contribution to both the society and the family economy, others are seeking relief from the physically draining and emotionally tiring task of child rearing (Hoffman, 1974). Most women, however, simply do not have a choice between working or not working; their employment is an economic necessity.

Most studies throughout the 1970's indicated that maternal employment was not generally damaging to children. Nevertheless, the shift in values surrounding children's upbringing is likely to influence the values they hold when they become adults. Specifically, children of working mothers may be more likely to favor social equality for women, believe that maternal employment is nonthreatening to the marital relationship, and see the division of household tasks as more equalitarian. Maternal employment positively influences the number of household tasks performed by the child.

Hoffman (1977) suggests that these changes in values will function to narrow the differences in the socialization experiences of boys and girls. Specifically, it is expected that there will be more independence training and occupational orientation for girls. One question raised by this possibility is whether girls will also acquire increased competitiveness and aggressiveness, thereby leaving neither gender specifically encouraged to provide nurturance, warmth, and expressiveness. One factor which can mitigate against this possibility is the increased participation of husbands and fathers in child-rearing and household responsibilities, thereby providing crucial role models for their daughters and sons.

Husbands and fathers. Until recent years, comparatively little research had been conducted on husband's perceptions of family values. Herb Goldberg's (1979) reaction to the "new woman" carries tones of reluctance and resignation which may be shared by many husbands:

> When I am asked about my own motivations for changing, my response is that the alternative of not changing seems far worse and, more frightening. Mine is not idealistic rebellion or personal sacrifice. From my point of view it is a matter of survival. I do not want to pay the price I see extracted from most of the men around me. (Goldberg, 1979, p. 280)

The present state of transition represents an important period for the husband as assumptions about the male and female roles are reexamined. Bernard (1981) describes the traditional male "good-provider role" as a diminishing responsibility for men in society. Traditionally, he asserts, the American male has defined himself through his earning capacity. If a woman worked, her husband was perceived by society as a failure. Although husband-wife duties were probably more clearly demarcated than at present, the good-provider role placed excessive expectations and demands on the male as well as the family system. Current demands placed on the husband seem to require greater nurturance and sensitivity and more participation in parenting and household duties. Bernard concludes that the traditional form of the good-provider role is fading, while a new role for men has yet to be determined.

Parenting is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the new role for husbands. Increased involvement of the father in his child's upbringing is a primary concern of many wives and husbands (Bernard, 1981). Hoffman (1977) proposed that as working women become more accepted in society, men will increasingly take part in child rearing.

Husbands and wives. Women's increasing participation in the labor force has become a central factor in influencing role redefinition in the husband-wife dyad. Tryon and Tryon (1982) make an important distinction between dual-worker and dual-career couples. Dual-career implies that both husband and wife exercise the choice to pursue a career. However, in a dual-worker couple it is economically necessary for one or both to work. This difference is significant for understanding trends in women's labor force participation. From 1960 to 1978 the participation rates of black women in the labor force increased only slightly from 48.2% to 53.3%. During the same period the rate for white women increased dramatically from 36.5% to 49.5% (Wallace, 1980). Clearly, the tremendous rise in female employment during the last two decades is for the most part attributable to increases among white women.

Blood and Wolfe (1960) suggest that women's decision making power increases by working. Money talks, and in this case it apparently liberates. In a review of dual-career couples, Tryon and Tryon (1982) found evidence of women's increased power in marriages. However, traditional values remained rooted inside and outside the home. For example, dual-career wives continued to be primarily responsible for household duties. Husbands tended to report that they were in favor of sharing housework, yet, often did not actually carry out this opinion. Additionally, women tended to subordinate their careers to their husbands, even when they had equal professional standing.

Hoffman (1977) takes a further step in predicting that the increases in female employment, longer life span, and smaller family size will substantially diminish sex differences between men and women over time. Thus, she predicts, women will become more asssertive and men more nurturant.

A note on grandparenting. Value changes also touch issues regarding the relationship of aging parents to the nuclear family. Whether the grandparents live with their children or not, an important family issue concerns how older members are integrated into the family structure. Common value laden family conflicts include: placing grandparents in nursing homes vs. taking them into the adult-child's home; assuming financial responsibility for grandparents vs. remaining economically autonomous; and revering grandparents for their experience, wisdom, etc. vs. viewing them as burdomsome and intrusive (Clark, 1969). Although individual differences certainly make each family situation unique, the value placed on grandparents as family members emerges as a critical consideration in a society which emphasizes youthfulness and individual freedom. In light of a steadily increasing proportion of Americans over age 65, and the highly publicized weaknesses of the Social Security system, the role of grandparents will continue to be a major family concern.

## Family Roles: Crisis and Adaptations

The relationship between the family and the state has centered on the goal of caring for dependent members (e.g., children, handicapped, elderly). The structure of this relationship has been molded by numerous values concerning the family's role in caring for dependent members and the conditions under which this role is shared with or taken over by the government.

## The Handicapped Child in the Family

The family system that operates on a reciprocal set of interactions will be affected significantly by a major crisis that strikes any particular member. Whether it is a chronic illness, loss of employment, or the presence of a handicapped child, one expects the influences to touch each family member. If we can understand these crises and their effects, we will have better comprehension of how the family system operates and what public policy can do to support families in crisis.

There appear to be two types of stress that affect all family members when a handicapped child is born: the symbolic death of the normal child that the parent expected (Fraber, 1976), and the chronic sorrow that emerges from day-to-day problems in caring for the handicapped child (Olshansky, 1962). The following represents a few key findings on family adaptation to a handicapped child:

> There appears to be an increase in divorce and suicide rates in families with handicapped children.
>
> (Price-Bonham & Addison, 1978)

> There appears to be a lessening of stress in families with available support systems.
>
> (Bristol, 1979)

> The handicapped child who demands the most constant care causes the most stress.
>
> (Bell, 1980)

> Fathers and mothers both believe that fathers should take a more active role in caring for the handicapped child.
>
> (Gallagher, Cross, & Scharfman, 1981)

> The father appears to be more deeply affected by the presence of a handicapped child than was originally thought.
>
> (Lamb, 1976)

> The mother's attachment to the handicapped child depends, in part, upon the child's responsiveness to social stimuli.
>
> (Fraiberg, 1974)

> The parents' response depends more upon the perceptions and values of the parent than the specific problems of the child.
>
> (Bradshaw & Lawton, 1978)

There are a variety of social support services such as counseling and respite care needed to help all members of the family unit to persevere and remain effective. Some of the major assumptions on the family with a handicapped child are provided in Table 3.

## Chronic Illness in the Family

Another group of families with special adaptation problems are those in which one of the children has a chronic illness (i.e., asthma, cystic fibrosis, rheumatoid arthritis, etc.). These families have much in common with families who have a handicapped child. There appears to be the same grief process that occurs when the parents realize that they have lost their "expected perfect child."

Also, many of the same family dynamics observable in families of handicapped children seem reproduced in families where a child has a chronic illness. Some of these problems which interfer with the role adaptation in the family system are:

1. Concerns about money (Salk, Hilgartner, & Granich, 1972).
2. The families' ability to seek outside recreation and leisure (Turk, 1964).
3. The burden of additional care, which usually falls on the mother.
4. Increasing rates of marital stress and breakdown (Simpson & Smith, 1979; Lavigne & Ryan, 1979).
5. Family morale and sibling adjustment problems (Burr, 1981; McLean & Ching, 1973).

The greatest need of these families is social support systems beyond the family. More specifically, they need access to such services as visiting nurses, homemaker services, and respite care:

> Public policy review should also examine the availability to families of support groups and mental health services which promote better communication in families and better sharing of tasks and can improve a family's ability to carry out its developmental tasks. (Burr, 1981, p. 24)

## Unemployment and the Family

Another factor that has a substantial impact on family roles is unemployment. The effects of short-term and of chronic unemployment on the family system has been a well-investigated phenomena over the past half century. Nevertheless, the specific impact of unemployment on the family system still remains less than clear, since several effects are occurring simultaneously. It is difficult to understand the relative effects of these changes through survey data, which represent the major form of available research information (Margolis & Farran, 1981).

Table 3

Factors that Influence Adaptation of Families with a Handicapped Child

1. The greater the family harmony prior to the onset of a particular stress (i.e., handicapped child), the more able the family will be to adapt to that stress without major problems.

2. The greater the agreement between family members as to how the allocation of responsibilities should be altered to adapt to the stress, the greater the family harmony.

3. The greater the agreement on the long-term goals for the handicapped child, the greater the chance for family harmony.

4. The greater the agreement on short-term treatment goals for the handicapped child, the greater the chance for family harmony.

5. The greater the number of support sources outside the family perceived to be of help, the greater the chance for family harmony.

Nontheless, three major and separate effects have been identified (see Table 4). The first of these is the obvious economic effect. Hill and Corcoran (1979) reported a loss of disposable income of from 23 to 35% in families where unemployment was experienced. Despite the comments from economists such as Feldstein and Friedman that jobless individuals are unemployed by choice because of generous unemployment benefits, there are numerous reports of dissatisfaction among those who remain unemployed.

In addition to the economic effect, there appears to be a major loss of status and disruption of family roles (Garraty, 1978; Thomas, McCabe, & Berry, 1980). There is substantial evidence that unemployment increases marital strain, separation, and divorce.

A third factor, less obvious than the two above, is the possible effect of unemployment on the health of family members. Cassell (1976) has shown that the process of adapting to new situations can create vulnerability and susceptibility to a variety of disease entities. Higher rates of heart attacks, hypertension, accidents, and mental illness among the unemployed have been reported in the literature review by Margolis and Farran (1981). Brenner (1976), in testimony before the Joint Economic Committee, suggested that a 1% increase in the unemployment rate sustained over 6 years was associated with 20,240 cardiovascular deaths, 920 suicides, 648 homicides, and 4,227 state mental hospital admissions.

In addition, there are several impressive indirect effects of unemployment on children. As shown in Table 4, there is evidence of an increase in child abuse, childhood illnesses, and marital dissolution. It seems clear that there is a sizable risk to the family system from chronic unemployment, and loss of economic resources is only one--and perpaps not even the most important--of the many effects. Anything that can be done through public policy to prevent these clearly unfavorable effects on the family should be given careful consideration.

## Divorce and the Family

Divorce is another major source of stress on family members. Hetherington (1979) reported that the divorce rate for the United States doubled between 1965 and 1978. In 1978, the U.S. had the highest divorce rate in the world, 5.3 per 1,000 population. It was estimated by Hetherington that 40% of current marriages of young adults would end in divorce. Furthermore, it is clear that parents are no longer as likely to stay together for the "sake of the children." Because of the high prevalence of divorce as a solution to marital conflict, it becomes increasingly important to identify the special problems that divorce brings to family members.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1978) reported on a special group of women who had been identified as "self-fulfilling" mothers. Their reaction to divorce was that they were happy, satisfied, and stimulated, and their initial feelings of lack of control and low self-esteem had dissipated rapidly. The authors pointed out, however, that the mothers gained this satisfaction at the expense of the well-being of their children:

Table 4

The Effects on Children of Parental Work Loss

| Outcome | Author (Date) | Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Economic Decline | Lundberg (1923) | Loss of savings and increased debt leading to a reduction in the comsumption of necessities. |
| | Hayghe (1979) | Substantial (34%) difference in income between one-earner families that experience unemployment and those that do not. |
| Family Disruption | Cherlin (1979) | Employment stability was associated with a significantly lower rate of marital dissolution. |
| | Mott & Moore (1979) | Similar conclusion as Cherlin, using a different data base. |
| Morbidity and Mortality | Margolis & Farran (1981) | Increased risk of illness in 18 families involving 31 children. |
| | Brenner (1973) | Infant and perinatal mortality are inversely related to employment rates. |
| Abuse | Gil (1973) | Risk of abuse three times greater in families where father is unemployed. |
| | Light (1973) | Unemployment was the single factor most often distinguishing abuse from non-abuse. |
| | Justice (1977) | Change in financial state and/or living conditions distinguished between 35 abusing and 35 non-abusing parents. |

> The children of these self-fulfilling mothers had the most frequent, intense, and enduring signs of emotional disturbance and behavior problems, both in the home and in the school. The quality of the mothers' relationships with their children was hurried, preoccupied, erratic, noncommunicative, and frequently emotionally disengaged. In addition, substitute child care and supervision were often inadequate.

## The One-Parent Family

Hetherington (1979) has pointed out that in the female-headed family, some of the father's functions may be taken over by the mother, and other responsibilities may be provided by either relatives, friends and neighbors, or a social institution such as a day care center or a school. However, the role that the alternative support systems play may be qualitatively different from that of an involved and accessible father.

There appear to be substantial difficulties between sons and mothers in mother-headed families. Even so, Hetherington concluded:

> that the conflict-ridden, intact family is more deleterious to family members than a stable home situation in which parents are divorced. An inaccessible, rejecting, or hostile parent in the nuclear family is more detrimental to the development of the child than is the absence of a parent. Divorce is often a positive solution to destructive family functioning, and the best statistical prognostications suggest that an increasing number of children are going to experience their parents' divorce and life in a one-parent family. However, most children experience divorce as a difficult transition, and life in a one-parent family can be viewed as a high-risk situation for parents and children. (Hetherington, 1979, p. 852)

# Public Policy and the Family

Previous sections of this paper have detailed how family roles have evolved historically and how these roles are influenced by family crises or adaptations. We have suggested that public policy already has a multitude of effects on family roles, either through deliberate design or unintended consequences.

## Unintended Consequences

Many policies designed to aid family members may turn out to have unintended consequences. For example, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, created by the Social Security Act of 1935, is the only program aimed explicitly at protecting poor children by providing income support to their families. The development of AFDC through the 1970's illustrates several examples of how income support for dependent children has been riddled with unintended consequences. One example is in the initial definition of "dependency." Assistance was limited to ". . . a child under the age of 16 who has been deprived of parental support by reasons of the death, continued absence

from home or mental or physical incapacity of a parent" and who was living with a relative in a home residence. This definition of dependency succeeded in excluding children with two parents, one of whom was under- or unemployed. The scope of AFDC was narrowed drastically, setting the stage for what was later to become one of its chief criticisms namely, that it destroys continuity of care within the family by breaking up the family unit. This unintended consequence was not modified until President John Kennedy extended aid to children of unemployed parents. In 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that AFDC-U must be open to all children of unemployed mothers on the same basis as it was to children of unemployed fathers. Although Congress had authorized aid to "parents" in 1961, it was limited to fathers in 1967 (Congressional Research Service, February 12, 1973).

Because governments' main interest is in individuals, policies often create negative outcomes for families while providing services for specific members of the family. Child Support Enforcement legislation is designed to secure needed income for mothers and dependent children from their absent husbands and fathers. This program seeks to meet the economic needs of the children and support the caretaking role of the mother by supplementing her income with the father's payments. According to some observers, the impact on the family as a unit has been to increase tension between father and mother by forcing mothers to cooperate in locating the fathers (Stack & Semmel, 1974):

> This requirement is not only an invasion of privacy; it acts to split poor families apart by pitting women against men within the family unit. (p. 123)

Other examples of unintended consequences include housing policies which break up neighborhoods, upgrading housing for those in previously sub-standard environments but separating children from their aged parents. The current trend toward deinstitutionalization for the mentally ill and mentally retarded, supported on both therapeutic and financial grounds, has placed considerable stress on the families of discharged individuals (Moroney, 1980).

There are a wide variety of policies currently abroad which appear to encourage maternal involvement within the family and by implication, discourage paternal involvement. Sagi and Sharon (1983) point out that in Israel working women are entitled to postnatal leave and 9 months unpaid leave of absence. Such policies are directed at mothers not fathers.

> Similar attitudes apply to the child allowances, tax reduction for employed mothers, subsidized fees or priority in admission to public day-care centers for children of employed mothers, job security for employed mothers, security of rights and seniority for women on maternity leave, flextime, sick leave during the child's illness, and the like. Should a society decide to make sexual equality attainable, it must be prepared to pay for the new arrangements designed to make it possible, for example, paternal benefits similar to those enjoyed by mothers. (Sagi & Sharon, 1983, p. 229)

The basic question is not whether there should be established public policy that influences the family; such influences clearly exist. The funda-

mental question is whether we can design policy which directly benefits families while minimizing negative, albeit unintended, consequences.

One key question seems to be the nature of the target group for the policies. Should they be universal, affecting all citizens, or should they be aimed at special subgroups for specific purposes? Moroney (1980) advocates a diversity of services along a continuum from the state assuming a complete responsibility for the individual (e.g., institutionalization) to total lack of state involvement in family life.

> The needs of families and individuals vary in time and over time, and ideally the state would respond to those variations with policies that support families when they need support and substitute for families when they are incapable of meeting the needs of their members. (Moroney, 1980, p. 14)

He emphasizes that the conceptualization of services must allow the family to move back and forth along the continuum based on need rather than a linear progression from no services to supportive services to substitute services.

Family Impact Statement

One approach to rational planning for family policy would be the establishment of a "family impact statement"--akin to environmental impact statements--that review the possible effects on the family of legislation now in existence or under consideration. Dempsey (1981) has proposed the development of a family impact statement as follows:

> Formulation -A family impact statement would involve analysis of selected pending legislation, policies, regulations, programs, in order to make explicit:
>
> -the potential effects or outcomes, both negative and positive, (with stress on the negative) of actions taken or pending (laws, policies, regulations) that might impinge on families (directly or indirectly);
>
> -the potential for unanticipated consequences (both negative and positive) of such actions; and
>
> -the potential lack of coherence or conflict with existing laws, policies, and programs.
>
> -All governmental activity, in some way, takes account of consequences or impacts. The form may b descriptive, rhetorical, financial, or other. The mily impact statement is intended to improve this process.

Development of a family impact statement is predicated on the assumption that it would be worthwhile to predict the likely consequences of government activity for families, and that the process of prediction could be improved over time. Successful development of a family impact statement requires a systematic policy analysis in which consequences are made explicit.

Alternative values would be identified, with an indication of how each could be realized or what the consequences of potential actions might be for varying sets of values. Where choices conflict, the final decision would have to be made in the political arena.

The ultimate goal of a family impact statement should be to improve the conditions of families. The method selected to achieve this end is to influence public decision making that affects families and children. Thus, the immediate goal of a family impact statement should be to raise national consciousness by making explicit the consequences of public policies for children and families.

Three family impact dimensions were identified:

> Membership dimension. In this column we considered whether the program had the potential to have an effect on families' membership trends (birth, marriage, separation, divorce, death) or household composition (which family members live together). Examples of programs with impact on this dimension would be family planning, abortion, health services, foster care, child abuse and neglect programs, community-based services for mental health or the penal system.
>
> Material support functions dimension. In this column we checked those programs which affect families' abilities to provide material support for their members through employment, securing of housing, job training. These include, for example, income maintenance programs, housing subsidies, and job training programs.
>
> Nurturant health functions dimension. A third dimension of impact clusters around the function of families to rear and nurture their dependents, encourage and support their physical, intellectual and emotional development and provide psychological sustenance to their members. Programs which exemplify the various kinds of impact on such functions are nutrition and preventive health programs; compensatory education and programs providing services to vulnerable family members such as the handicapped, mentally ill, elderly, young children. (Dempsey, 1981, p. 32-33)

Such a family impact statement would provide the basis for further policy and decision making.

## Family Roles Changes: Child Care Policy Options

Since one of the major barriers to providing women a choice in the decision between full-time child rearing and employment is the lack of available or affordable child care, then one major issue of changing family roles is policy options for child care.

The essence of a policy analysis is to: 1) delineate a public issue, 2) develop alternative strategies that are designed to cope with that public

issue, 3) design evaluative criteria by which one can weigh the relative merit of the alternatives, 4) collect data, judgments, expert opinions, etc., on the relative merit of each of the strategies in each criterion.

This approach yields a decision matrix, of the type shown in Figure 1, that can be presented to decision makers, along with the accompanying information and procedures so there would be the possibility for a rational decision regarding the relative merit of the strategies in question.

The preceding sections have delineated a major public issue--the changing role of women in the family. One of these changes has had a major impact on one of the significant family responsibilities, namely child care and child rearing. The scope and influence of these changes clearly make this a major public issue. The increase of women in the work force, either because of economic necessity or personal preference, has left a major unfilled gap in the family and social structure with relation to child care.

What happens to the children of two working parents? What happens to the children in a one-parent family where the mother must provide economic support? What happens when the family is under additional stress caused by a handicapped or chronically ill child? The society has considered or discussed a number of alternatives, and these are presented in the decision matrix portrayed in Figure 1.

The various dimensions of the issues that have to be balanced or traded off in child care have been presented by Ruopp and Travers (1982) as follows:

1. Parents and caregivers want to provide care of the highest possible quality for their children;

2. Parents wish to purchase care at a price that does not compete excessively with other "goods" needed for the family market basket; and

3. Caregivers want to receive a wage that will promote stable employment and be commensurate with their training, experience, and the value of the service they provide.

The following strategies have been discussed as solutions, or parts of solutions, for the issue of: Who cares for the children of dual-worker parents? In this paper, the term "child care" is used broadly to include care for dependent children during the work day, in the evenings (not all workers are on the day shift); and after-school.

Due to our focus on child care for single parents, or for dual-career families, this analysis does not detail policy options to support the mother or father who would elect to remain at home, rather than leave their children to join the labor force. However, some policy options to support this choice would include paid maternity leave; temporary disability insurance for child care leave; income transfer programs; and social security credit for time spent working in the home.

# FIGURE 1

## CRITERIA FOR STRATEGY CHOICE

(CHILD CARE)

| STRATEGIES | COST | VERTICAL EQUITY | POLITICAL FEASIBILITY | PREFERENCES SATISFACTION | EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. PUBLIC DAY-CARE CENTERS FOR ALL CHILDREN | | | | | |
| 2. CHILD CARE PROGRAMS FOR POOR AND HANDICAPPED | | | | | |
| 3. CHILD CARE VOUCHERS TO LOW-INCOME PARENTS | | | | | |
| 4. NEGATIVE INCOME TAX | | | | | |
| 5. INDUSTRY SUPPORTED CHILD CARE | | | | | |
| 6. TAX CREDIT | | | | | |

## Alternative Solutions

Public support for child care for all children. This strategy would, in essence, be a downward extension of the current public commitment to public school education. That commitment traditionally begins at age 5 in kindergarten. There are already well-established programs for handicapped children (The Education for All Handicapped Children Act) that provide for public support of special education for handicapped children at an earlier age. Many states have similar provisions for early education, including North Carolina. Providing child care for all children would help single-parent or dual-worker families seek employment, without the burdens and restrictions caused by inadequate child care.

Child care for children with special needs. This strategy provides public support for child care programs in a center setting for children who have developmental problems. The rationale for this program, similar to that of Project Head Start, is that some specialized attention is needed to help the development of children with special needs so they would be ready to take profit from public schooling when they reach school age. This strategy differs from the first strategy in its focus on specialized education for children rather than greater choices for working mothers.

Child care vouchers to low-income parents. The voucher proposal has received considerable attention in a number of different versions and settings including the purchase of services from such institutions as public schools and rehabilitation services (Coons & Sugarman, 1978). The basic strategy would be for the parents to receive a voucher or check that could be used to purchase child care services at the place of their choice. The philosophy behind the voucher system is that it places more power and decision making in the hands of parents and allows them to choose the type of environment they find most effective for their own child. The voucher could be spent at child-care centers or perhaps child-care homes or in a variety of eligible settings.

Negative income tax. This strategy again focuses on the special needs of low-income families by providing additional funds for families below a particular income level. Such an approach provides resources for the purchase of child care or other family needs for those families who, under ordinary circumstances, would not be able to purchase them.

Industry supported child care. This strategy is based on the notion that a manufacturing concern or business has a major stake in the welfare and well-being of its employees. There are several methods by which industries and businesses have supported child care for their employees, but three primary methods might be identified: 1) provision of on-site child care; 2) purchase of child care slots in existing centers and family day care homes; and 3) cash subsidies for child care arrangements made by employees.

Child care tax credit. At the present time, any family may receive a tax credit of 20% of their annual child care expenses up to $2,000 for one child or $4,000 for two or more children. Nearly 4 million Americans use this credit at a cost of about 1 billion dollars in federal expenditures for child care (Moore, 1982). The remaining 80% of the cost of the child care would have to be provided in some other fashion.

This set of strategies, of course, does not represent the entire universe of possibilities, but only those most discussed at the present time.

Criteria for Solution Choice

The other dimension of the decision matrix in Figure 1 lists commonly applied criteria by which the alternative policies can be compared. These criteria are presented to illustrate the commonly recognized fact that many different factors influence a final policy decision.

Cost. One of the universal factors in reviewing any public strategy is the issue of cost. How much is necessary in order to carry out each of the proposed strategies? It is this type of analysis that would get to the necessary economics of the program and would form a substantial factor in the final decision. This is not to say that the cheapest strategy would be necessarily the most desirable. Rather, the final decision would depend on the pattern of responses to the other criteria. That is why public decision making and public policymaking becomes so difficult. It is because it is quite rare that any of the strategies emerge at the top in all of the criteria. Eventually, it is the relative importance of the specific criteria that must play a fundamental role in the final decision making.

One basic dilemma of the child care strategies is that many of the families that are most in need of support can least afford to obtain it. Winget (1982) points out that a child care expense of $4,000 could be expected for two children in full-time center care. Such an expense constitutes about 47% of the total income of the average single-parent mother, while only representing 13% of the income of high-income families! For families at the poverty income level, such child-care provisions could take up to 60% of total family income. Clearly, the cost of child care, particularly for low-income families, is prohibitive.

Vertical equity. Many social policies are intended implicitly, if not explicitly, to aid persons who have been at the bottom of society through little or no fault of their own (i.e., poverty, handicapping conditions, etc.). The principle of vertical equity is to provide aid to these persons to bring them more into the mainstream of society.

Political feasibility. This criterion is almost always dealt with in terms of informed or experienced judgment. It is quite possible that the strategy that seems to be the most desirable and beneficial on other grounds turns out to be totally unacceptable from a political standpoint. Few political figures wish to initiate a policy that will result in their being thrown out of office. There is an even more likely possibility that some policies could not be started or implemented because of fundamental value conflicts in the society or massive opposition on the part of a particular segment of society. Therefore, regardless of the professional data or evidence available, there comes a point where some judgment is applied as to whether a policy is politically acceptable.

Preference satisfaction. Another criterion often applied to policy selection is that a policy should provide the individual receiving services the maximum amount of choice.

Past evidence of success. Another criterion is evidence of the past effectiveness of a strategy. This criterion is particularly important in considering child care options since there are a wide variety of concerns about possible negative impact of various types of child care. In this instance, one can draw upon the available research literature, where possible, that might suggest that some strategies have demonstrated benefits to the child and family, and therefore could be utilized with some confidence as a larger policy at the state or national level. Other program alternatives may either have little available evidence or, in some cases, negative evidence to suggest that there might be major problems in trying to implement such a strategy.

## Analysis of Strategies

The nature of this policy analysis is to rate the strategies across these criteria and either come to a judgment that one strategy is clearly superior or in some cases that two or three strategies seem to have relatively equal merit. The decision makers would have to make their decision on the basis of other factors of personal preference or perhaps an overriding consideration for one of the criteria such as political feasibility. In the next section, we evaluate each strategy against the criteria defined above.

Strategy #1 - Child care for all children. A major argument against the strategy of universal child care is cost. Figure 2 shows the potential public cost when weighed against the percentage of children receiving the service and the percentage of the total service being paid for by public funds. Given a North Carolina population of about 400,000 children ages 0-5. and a projected cost per child of $2,000 per year, then the total cost of child care would be $800 million.

If one wished to provide child care services for 60% of families (a likely figure for women in the work force), then the cost would be $480 million as seen in Figure 2. If one wished to pay 60% of the costs for 60% of the families, the cost would be $288 million, and so forth. To place such costs in perspective, the total revenue for the State of North Carolina in Fiscal Year 81-82 was $3,275,619,875 for the General Fund plus federal revenue and an additional $674,034,180 for the Highway Fund.

The public schools in North Carolina spend about $654 million per year. Together with post-secondary education, the costs of education amount to almost three-fourths of the state budget. Any major state commitment to take on a greatly increased role in child care support carries with it substantial fiscal consequences.

Universal child care would receive a low rating on the vertical equity criterion because it would equally benefit citizens of all income levels.

In terms of political feasibility, the Child Development Act sponsored by Brademas and Mondale and passed by the Congress in 1974, only to be vetoed by President Nixon, represented a high-water mark for such efforts at the federal level. The strong political attacks against the bill and its sponsors have discouraged others from coming forth with similar proposals during the past decade. These attacks were based, not only on costs, but particularly on the possible negative effects of a massive day care program on the solidarity of

Figure 2

Potential Costs of Child Care - North Carolina

Percent of Total Costs Paid by Public Funds

(000)

| Percent of Children Served | 100 | 60 | 20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 800,000 | 480,000 | 160,000 |
| 60 | 480,000 | 288,000 | 96,000 |
| 20 | 160,000 | 96,000 | 40,000 |

Number of Children in North Carolina Age 0-5 = Est. (400,000)

Median Cost - Child Care = $2000

the American family. These concerns appear to remain in our society and cause us to assign a low rating to the political feasibility of this strategy.

As far as preference satisfaction is concerned, there would be little to be gained or lost. The availability of more child care services might give some additional choices in terms of options as to the type.

With regard to program effectiveness, two separate targets would have to be considered. Does providing child care services increase the the number of women in the work force, and does day care have sizable effects, positive or negative, upon the child or family unit. In places where child-care services are available, the percentage of women that are able to work appears to increase. There appear to be benefits to youngsters in child care with little accompanying harm. Most of the organized research programs have been done, however, on demonstration or exemplary programs, and the data obtained from them will not necessarily indicate the results from less well-staffed programs.

There has probably been more data collected on group day care than the other strategies for child care, although much of it has not been of high scientific quality. Available research does, however, seem to answer some of the more fundamental questions that have been raised. Rutter (1983), in summarizing literature on group day care, says:

> ... that some of the more alarming stereotypes about day care can be rejected, it is equally obvious that we have some way to go before we are in the position to make well-based policy decisions on what type of care is most suitable for which children in which circumstances. ...There are indications that day care influences to some extent the form of children's social behavior. ...Further there are indications that the ways in which it does so may be determined by the age and other characteristics of the child and by the characteristics of the family. (p. 22)

A variety of efforts have been made to determine the effect of environmental differences among child care procedures. One such study was carried out in Bermuda where 90% of youngsters of 2 years of age and over are in some form of day-care program. McCartney, Scarr, Phillips, Grajek, and Schwarz (1981) concluded from their study of the environmental effects on a child's development that "qualities of day care environments affect the developmental levels of language and social behaviors of children in them. Good overall quality but low adult-child interactions was associated with maladjustment in the children" (p. 147).

So, the nature and quality of child care may affect the child, and in a secondary fashion all of the family unit.

Strategy #2 - Child care services for low income and handicapped children. The second strategy of providing child care services to children with special needs differs in a number of respects from the first strategy. In terms of cost, the number of children involved would be roughly 20% of the population, and thus the total sum of money required would be about $160 million. While

this is a substantial sum of money, it is considerably less than required for a universal application of public child care.

In terms of vertical equity, this strategy would receive a high rating by providing greater benefits to those at the lower end of the income distribution.

In terms of political feasibility, these programs have already demonstrated a certain amount of public support. The passage of P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, clearly illustrates the positive response to the needs of handicapped children. Prior to that federal action, every state in the union had provided some form of special education provisions which allocated supplementary money for a wide variety of handicapped children in the public schools (Kirk & Gallagher, 1983). Similar funds available for rehabilitation services in adulthood confirm the political feasibility of providing extra resources for the handicapped.

Similarly, programs such as Head Start and Follow-Through have indicated that society is willing to invest extra resources in youngsters from poor families to help them become competent and adapt more effectively to the public schools. In terms of preference satisfaction, there is little to choose from, and the parents in these situations must either take the provided program or keep their children at home.

In this strategy, as well as strategy #1, the evidence of effectiveness involves the impact on the mother in the family as well as the child. Providing Head Start and similar services allows the mother from a one-parent or low-income family to be in the work force and as such has been a substantial plus in its own right. Reviews of research on families with handicapped children have also indicated that the respite care and support that the families get from organized service programs for handicapped children have been extraordinarily beneficial to the entire family unit. Many subjective and informal comments have been made by family members indicating that such programs have "saved our marriage" (Bristol & Gallagher, 1982).

In addition, the result of preschool programs for poor children reported by Lazar and Darlington (1982) indicates long-term benefits in academic efficiency and less need to refer low income children for special services. Thus, there appears to be substantial evidence for effectiveness for both low-income families and families with handicapped children in existing programs.

A recent evaluation of programs for preschool handicapped children found that more than half the children in these programs were able to enter the public schools in a mainstream setting. It would appear, then, that these programs return economic as well as social benefits. In programs for handicapped children, evidence is available that the father does not often compensate or modify their pattern of responsibilities in the family, although they often feel that they should (Gallagher, Cross, & Scharfman, 1981). The "respite" for the wife comes from the ability to have the child under the care of others for a part of the day.

Strategy #3 - Vouchers for child care. The provision of child care vouchers to low-income parents would cost a substantial amount assuming that

the full cost for perhaps 20% of the population would have to be borne by the public. Therefore, such vouchers would cost about $160 million in North Carolina and would represent a substantial fiscal investment by public or other sources.

In terms of vertical equity, vouchers would receive a high rating in the sense that they provide aid to those families most in need and therefore possess the potential of bringing them more into the mainstream.

Regarding political feasibility, the voucher system has had some considerable publicity over the past two decades, but relatively few adoptions. The literature on vouchers has been reviewed by Levin (1980), who has suggested some of the reasons for the voucher plan's lack of political feasibility. Among educators there is a major suspicion that the program does not achieve what it purports to do; namely, provide options for the parents and, through competition for the parent's resources, better child care programs. Further, vouchers would seem to separate, rather than integrate, various cultural groups, particularly if they are given to all parents.

In terms of preference satisfaction, child care vouchers would have a positive response in the sense that parents would be able to purchase child care from a center, a home, or a variety of other settings according to their wishes and needs.

There is little evidence of effectiveness of a voucher system. Some concern has been expressed that the vouchers would never reach the level of financing necessary in order to provide reasonable support for effective child care. These vouchers would almost inevitably have to be supplemented by other monies for child care needs to be met.

With regard to handicapped children, vouchers have been used in some states to provide parents with money to purchase services that the local community did not provide (i.e., educating deaf children). Gallagher (1981) pointed out that these vouchers often fell far short of the true cost of special education and tended to slow down special education program development in the state. That is, it was easier for a local community to hand the parent a voucher than to develop a program.

Strategy #4 - Tax credit for child care. The policy of providing tax credits to families using child care has a brief but interesting history in the United States. The policy began in 1959 as a deduction for work-related day care expenses; at that time the deduction was for only $600 and applied solely to households in which both parents worked and where adjusted gross income was $4,500 or less. In 1969 Congress raised the income ceiling to $6,000 and the maximum deduction to $900. Nonetheless, the deduction was still worth an average of only $70 per year to families. Congress made several subsequent changes in the deduction, but they served only to double the savings to families; the average tax savings of $135 could hardly be considered a major stimulant to female job force participation nor a major benefit for low-income working families (Nelson, 1982).

In 1976, however, Congress dropped the deduction approach and substituted a tax-credit approach. Thus, working families of any income could deduct 20% of care-related expenses up to $2,000 for one child and $4,000 for two or more

children. To some families, then, up to $800 could be saved on child care expenses. By 1982, the child care tax credit program had resulted in a savings of $1 billion to working parents.

Cost. Since families calculate their own taxes, there are minimal administrative costs involved in this strategy. We know of no way to estimate the annual cost to the Internal Revenue Service of processing the child care tax credit, but the figure is likely to be quite modest. Particularly as compared with child care programs like Title XX, which require federal, state, and local (usually county) administration, the child care tax credit must be rated as highly efficient.

From a federal perspective, the U.S. Treasury is equally affected by a given categorical expenditure and a tax credit of equal size. In the former case, the money is collected by taxation and then spent; in the latter case, the money is simply never collected. But in both cases, the money is unavailable for other expenditures. Nonetheless, it appears that the Congress is more willing to grant tax credits than it is to collect and then spend the same amount of money. Indeed, one might speculate from a political feasibility perspective whether the 97th Congress would be willing to spend a billion dollars of tax money--as in fact was spent on the tax credit in 1982--to support a categorical program of child care for middle class citizens.

From a child advocate's perspective, tax credits are a useful device for persuading the Congress to "spend" money that it would not be likely to spend from tax revenues. Nonetheless, as Treasury officials have maintained all along (see Nelson, 1982), tax expenditures or credits are a threat to the integrity of the tax structure. Tax expenditures represent revenue losses to the U.S. Treasury, and to the extent that Congress finds these expenditures easier to make than regular expenditures from tax dollars, the Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service will attempt to bring Congress to a more rational way of thinking about their actions.

Equity. The child care tax credit, like all tax credits, has serious equity problems. Theoretically, a tax credit can address equity issues just as well as the graduated income tax system does--and by use of the same mechanism. To take child care as an example, the size of the tax credit could be conditioned by family income. Thus, for example, a family with an income of $10,000 could be granted a 60% tax credit on child care expenditures, while a family with an income of $30,000 could be granted a 20% tax credit. In this way, the criterion of vertical equity would be met since families with fewer resources would benefit relatively more than families with more resources.

In practice, however, tax credits have two limitations that reduce their effectiveness as a means of achieving equity. First, they are useless to families who pay no income taxes. Since millions of low-income American families do not pay income taxes, or pay a very small amount, a credit subtracted from their tax bill is not much help.

Second, tax credits can be claimed only when income taxes are filed. Since the taxes against which the credit is applied are withheld from a worker's paycheck, the money is not available until the income tax is filed. Take an example. If a family pays a child care fee of $200 per month, it will

pay an average of 12 times (a total of $2400) before it can claim the credit on its annual income tax return. Such a cash flow problem may not be of great consequence to a family earning $40,000 a year, but to a family earning $15,000 or $20,000 a year, it can be critical. Indeed, one can easily imagine that many families who could afford the price of day care if the amount of the tax credit could be excluded at the time of purchase would not be able to actually purchase day care because the money would not be available when owed.

A solution to this problem with the tax credit is to make the credit refundable on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Thus, if a family had a monthly daycare bill of $200 and a 40% tax credit, they could receive a check for $80 every month or $160 every other month. An alternative administrative procedure would be to reduce withholding by an amount equal to the credit, although this approach has the disadvantage of placing a heavy burden on employers.

Nonetheless, this tax credit approach must be given a low rating in the equity criterion.

Feasibility. Since we currently have a child care tax credit worth about $1 billion to primarily middle class parents, the appropriate question concerning feasibility is whether the system can be expanded. Three types of expansion might be considered: (1) increasing the percentage of child care expenses that could be credited; (2) making the system more progressive; and (3) making the credit refundable. The last of these provisions was discussed at length when the original child care tax credit was passed in 1976. Liberals, and especially Senator Kennedy, supported the provision while conservatives opposed it, though some conservatives appeared willing to go along with a refundability provision if Title XX child care funds were cut. Even stronger opposition came from the IRS. Arguments against refunding are that it would cost more money, would be administratively complex, and would make the tax system fulfill a welfare function.

Despite these arguments against refundability, the child care tax credit has formidable allies in the Congress. Not the least of these is Senator Russell Long who has a long history of supporting programs that will encourage mothers--and especially low-income mothers--to work. Thus, it is not a forgone conclusion that child care tax credit expansion or even refundability are dead political issues.

Preference satisfaction. Of all the policies proposed here, none are more appropriate for satisfying people's preferences than the tax credit. Since the 1978 "Grandma" amendment, citizens can use the child care tax credit for virtually any type of care, including that supplied in the taxpayer's own home by relatives (if they are not dependents of the taxpayer). Thus, in accord with the requirement of the preference satisfaction criterion, citizens are free to pursue their own ends in selecting child care, and still receive the tax benefit.

There is an interesting anomaly, however, about the child care tax credit and preference satisfaction. Recall that few low-and moderate-income families are able to take advantage of the tax credit. Many such families, however, are able to enjoy direct day care subsidies, primarily through Title XX of the Social Security Act. To take advantage of Title XX funds, low- and moderate-

income families must place their children in licensed child care. This requirement, of course, substantially reduces the range of opportunities available to these families, and thereby reduces their preference satisfaction (Haskins, 1979). Moreover, the implicit message of the government seems to be that middle-income parents can be trusted to select good care for their children, while low-income families cannot and must therefore be assisted by government in selecting care. Some critics might respond to this argument by claiming that government must assume responsibility for the quality of services it subsidizes. The fallacy in this argument, of course, is that the tax credit is no less a government "expenditure" than the categorical expenditures under Title XX.

Strategy #5: Negative income tax. There are several variants of the Negative Income Tax (NIT) idea, but all have at least two things in common. First, any family--whether one- or two-parent--that falls below a certain income level is automatically guaranteed an income supplement that will bring them to the minimum level. In short, this program guarantees an income floor below which no American family would be allowed to fall. Second, poor families with incomes would not have their earnings heavily taxed--often at or near 100% as in the current AFDC system--and would thus always have an incentive to work. If, for example, the income floor were set at $6,000, and the tax on earned income at 50%, a family earning $4,000 would have the floor of $6,000, plus their after-tax income (50% of $4,000) of $2,000, or a total income of $8,000. This policy, of course, could be used to provide families with money to spend on day care, although that outcome would not be the exclusive purpose of the policy. In fact, the NIT would greatly expand the public commitment to maintaining family income, and would include millions of working poor families.

Cost and efficiency. The cost of an NIT system would be very great. Indeed, even a program with a moderate guarantee level equal to poverty level income and a reduction rate of 50% would cost at least $30 billion--about three times the cost of the current AFDC program (see Keeley, Robins, Spiegelman, & West, 1977, pp. 26-30).

Regarding efficiency, the use of an NIT to subsidize day care must be considered in a much broader perspective. The primary purpose of an NIT, after all, is to provide a floor under family income and thereby assure a minimum level of purchasing power to all families. One service that families may purchase is child care, but there would certainly be many others. Thus, setting aside questions about the overall efficiency of an NIT--which would involve information on work incentive, family dissolution, administrative costs, and so on--it is apparent that using an NIT program to subsidize child care purchases by families is not very efficient. If the major purpose is to help families pay for child care, several of the other policies considered here would have greater target efficiency; i.e., would provide greater resources for child care with relatively fewer dollars of public expenditure. Indeed, using an NIT to support child care would give complete control of expenditures to individual citizens; as a result, there is no way to know how much of the money would actually be spent on child care.

Equity. By definition, the NIT is a policy that meets the criterion of vertical equity. Supported out of general tax revenues which are collected

primarily by means of a graduated income tax system, program benefits would go almost exclusively to low-income families. Thus, the NIT can be given a very high ranking on the equity criterion.

Political feasibility. The feasibility of Congressional approval of an NIT program any time in the near future is very low. Two arguments support this judgment. First, as suggested above, even a modest NIT would cost a great deal of money--on the order of $30 billion. Given the current state of the economy and the large projected federal deficits, an expenditure of this size seems extremely unlikely. Second, the income maintenance experiments, and especially the Seattle-Denver experiment, have provided persuasive data that an NIT would lead to increased rates of family dissolution (Hannan, Tuma, & Groeneveld, 1976). As Steiner (1981) has pointed out, these findings place supporters of the NIT in the position of seeming to be anti-family since critics could charge them with favoring a policy that has been shown to increase divorce rates. Thus, NIT opponents would have a very effective weapon in their arsenal of arguments against the NIT.

Preference satisfaction. Like the income tax credit, the NIT would increase the ability of families to purchase the type of child care that suited their own preferences. Since the major outcome of an NIT would be to increase disposable family income, families would be free to purchase the type of care that best met their needs. In fact, if Title XX were "cashed out" (converted to direct money payments to families) and an equivalent amount of money given to families, parents may well purchase unlicensed day care at a cheaper rate than the largely center-based, high-quality care they are currently required to use, and spend the difference on other goods and services that would further increase their preference satisfaction. Recent evidence from the national housing experiments (Frieden, 1980) suggests, for example, that the majority of families may prefer to consume some lower quality goods in order to increase their ability to purchase other types of goods and services. Thus, many families may use informal, lower quality, child care arrangements in order to save money for other types of expenditures. Child care advocates might argue that such a decision by parents demonstrates that there would be a tradeoff between preference satisfaction and negative effects on children, but they could not argue that the NIT was ineffective in helping citizens raise their level of preference satisfaction.

Strategy #6 - Employer-supported child care.[1] Employer-supported child care is actually a range of options for supporting care of children while parents work. At least three distinct approaches might be recognized: 1) on-site provision of child care by employers; 2) purchase of child care slots in already existing community facilities; and 3) employer subsidies--or vouchers--for employee purchase of child care.

With the exception of on-site provision of child care, which has not been very successful in the United States (Friedman, 1980), the various types of employer-supported child care operate only on demand for child care. That is,

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[1]An excellent overview of employer-supported day care in North Carolina has been prepared by Florence Glasser (1981).

employers simply try to assist their employees pay for the type of care they want for their children. On the whole, then, employer-supported child care is a mechanism for stimulating the child care market, but not for directly increasing supply.

As might be expected, businesses have sound reasons for investing in child care for their employees. These include lower job turnover, lower absenteeism, improved employee work attitudes, and ability to attract new employees. Taken together, these potential outcomes of employer-sponsored care suggest that employers, and not just employees, may benefit from good child care because parents with good arrangements may be more productive.

At present, there is a need for studies that would examine this case in more detail. As matters now stand, no one knows whether employer-sponsored child care actually has these effects. The logic of the case for employee-sponsored child care based on employer self interest is quite apparent, but whether the logic would be supported by actual data is not known. Nonetheless, we can make some claims about the characteristics of employer-sponsored child care.

Cost. Government can stimulate the various types of employer-sponsored child care by offering tax incentives. Just as both the federal and state governments now subsidize parents' purchase of care through the tax credits, both the federal and state government currently provide deductions to employees for expenditures on some types of care. Both the purchase of child care slots and vouchers, for example, can be entirely deductible by employers. There is little doubt that such government incentives stimulate employers to create or expand programs of child care support. Even so, the portion of business costs that is deductible or subject to tax credits must be counted as public expenditures.

Equity. Employer-sponsored child care is only moderately effective in promoting equity. To the extent that businesses use child care as a means of attracting and holding good employees, the program will be inequitable. This would be the case if only skilled and management-level employees would be involved in these programs; since these are precisely the employees who already attract high salaries and fringe benefits, providing them with child care subsidies would further promote inequity.

Second, it is apparent that only employed workers would receive benefits from employer-supported child care. Possibly there could be provisions for some laid off workers, but on the whole unemployed people would be excluded from the benefits. Again, the characteristic of employer-supported child care is incompatible with the equity criterion since the people most in need of benefits would be excluded.

Political feasibility. Both federal and North Carolina tax laws already provide incentives for employers to subsidize child care for their employees. The question of feasibility, then, primarily concerns whether these incentives could be expanded by increasing the size of tax credits and deductions for employer-sponsored child care. At the federal level, two factors suggest that the feasibility of expanding employer tax incentives have low feasibility.

First, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is certain to see further tax expenditures as an attack on the integrity of the tax code. The IRS has consistently made this argument against child care tax credits (see Nelson, 1982), and could be expected to do so again. Second, there appears to be very strong feeling among policymakers that tax reductions are a major cause of the huge and growing federal deficit. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that there will be solid opposition to further tax reductions in the next few years.

Similarly, the revenues generated by North Carolina's tax base are under great pressure. Governor Hunt has declared that a raise for state employees is his highest priority if funds can be found to finance the raise. Thus, at least in the immediate future, it seems unlikely that North Carolina policymakers could be persuaded to further erode the corporate tax base. The long-term basis for state tax incentives to business, on the other hand, may be brighter. North Carolina has enjoyed good success in attracting industries to the state, and might be expected to continue this record. One outcome of continued success, of course, would be to further augment the state tax base and perhaps to provide an opportunity for some reduction in corporate taxes. If this possibility actually occurs, it would certainly be in line with North Carolina's image as a progressive state and a state concerned with family policy to expand the tax incentives for employers to provide child care and other benefits for their employees.

In summary, the feasibility of federal policy to encourage employer-sponsored child care appears to be low both in the immediate and long-term future. At the state level, however, there may be some possibility for increased tax incentives in the next few years.

Preference satisfaction. The preference satisfaction criterion does less to help us choose between employer-sponsored child care and other means of expanding child care support than it does to help us recommend a particular type of employer-sponsored care. More specifically, if employers build their own child care center, or if they purchase slots in local centers or family day care homes, they limit preference satisfaction by reducing the choices available to families. By contrast, employers can maximize the preference satisfaction criterion by providing employees with a voucher-type of subsidy worth a specified amount and allowing families to make their own care arrangements. The tradeoff here is that employers would have no control over the quality of care they subsidize. On the other hand, some would argue that families are capable of making these decisions and that it is not an appropriate role of employers to make judgments about the quality of care arrangements selected by their families.

## A Final Word

As is the case with most policy issues, the choice of the appropriate strategy or combination of strategies in child care is not an easy one. Strategies that may have advantages in one area (such as cost) might have disadvantages in others (such as political feasibility). In an area of such fundamental importance as the family, there are also bound to be strong emotions and conflicting values that will cause different people to weight the advantages and disadvantages of particular strategies differently.

Indeed, there are other alternatives which focus on workplace options for adult workers rather than on child care. Some workplace options are: more part-time employment at all occupational levels; wider use of flextime and job-sharing; pro-rated benefits for part-time employees; sick leave days to care for sick children; a "cafeteria" approach to employee benefits, i.e., provide a core of benefits to which employees can select options based on their individual needs (child care, counseling, dental care); lower the age limit for vesting in pension plans; make provisions in pension plans for break in employment; and charging each state to provide leadership by being a "model" employer.

The purpose of a policy analysis is to display the major options available to address an important public problem and to present the positive and negative elements of each strategy as completely as possible. Such analyses will not eliminate controversy, nor should they. They should point out the consequences and implications of various policies as clearly and as quantitatively as possible so that citizens and policymakers can decide, on the basis of sound information, which policies they prefer.

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