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ABSTRACT

Myths related to four questions regarding women's roles in early childhood education and society are described, and underlying assumptions for each question are examined. It is argued that each of the myths has served to restrict, deprive, neglect, or distort the development of women and their relationships. Recommendations for overcoming each myth are offered. The questions are: (1) What are the fundamental and universal characteristics of persons responsible for rearing and educating young children? (2) Why have women's roles in early education and society as a whole been linked so closely and for so long to the biology and sociology of the home? (3) How can the roles of men and women in the development of the field of early childhood education be understood as complementary rather than as an adversarial dichotomy? (4) Is today's family day care home a continuation of Comenius' 17th century school of infancy, or is it a new and different thing? These questions address, respectively, myths of equality by association, logical extension, the false dichotomy, and the "rose by any other name." It is concluded that the field of family day care offers women a radical role in personal and professional development. A selected bibliography with 8 items supplements a reference list with 41 items. (RH)

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The Many Roles of Women in Early Childhood Education:
From J. A. Comenius to Family Day Caregiver

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The Many Roles of Women in Early Childhood Education: From John Amos Comenius to Family Day Caregiver

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Throughout most of Western history, women have been viewed primarily as mother, wife and caregiver of the family, rather than as worker, leader and citizen, in addition to the other roles (Chafe, 1972; Schaef, 1981; Sinclair, 1965). Even the fulfillment of the seemingly more fundamental gender-based roles has been frought with confusion and difficulties (Costin, 1985; Ruddick, 1989). The resistance, if not the outright refusal, of much of Western social and political structure - the persons in power - to acknowledge women in a universal light has resulted in the rejection of the basic definition of feminism: "A feminist is one who thinks that women are primarily human beings with the same minds, ambitions, ability and skills, consciences, and power for good and evil, as men" (Stanton, in Rupp, 1982, p. 49). Relegating persons to pre-defined, stereotypical categories based on prejudged assumptions ignores actual competencies, projects as reality biased and distorted perceptions, and results in serious losses of human resources.

The periodic rise of a feminist perspective has demonstrated to everyone the value of filling a variety of roles throughout one's lifetime, as men have always done (Chafe, 1972; Friedan, 1963). For example, rarely is a man expected to stop work or put a career on hold when a child is born to the family; it is assumed that the man's life will expand to incorporate the father's tasks. On the other hand, women are usually expected to make such changes, and even when satisfactory arrangements are made for child care, often feel guilty about leaving the child in the care of someone else, usually another woman, the "other mother." The expectation is that women will restrict their life and diminish their roles in favor of a biological condition that results in a major change in the family structure.

The persistence of the problem of how the needs of children shall be met by adult society dramatizes the complex human condition that women play a significant role in the relationships that develop between family members, particularly with children, both their own and those of other people. Two questions posed by the dilemma of role choosing address some of the underlying assumptions about the early education and care of children: What are the fundamental and universal characteristics of persons responsible for the rearing and education of young children, and why have women's roles been linked so closely and for so long to the biology and sociology of the family and the home?

The effect of the woman-child dyad on the healthy development of the larger society is captured in part by the dichotomy described by the 19th century child advocate who associated "mother love" with home and duty, and "father power" with order and government (Cooper, 1893, p. 93). It is of interest in a paper on the roles of women in early childhood education that Cooper urged that a kindergarten be established in every poor neighborhood in order to "save" the children from lives of crime, poverty and insanity, but that such a benefit for young children did not address the political and economic conditions that permitted the destructive situations to exist in the first place. To take Cooper's recommendation a step further would be to demonstrate that love belongs to mothers and fathers, along with home and duty, and that power belongs to fathers and mothers, along with order and government. In light of perceived differences between the roles of men and women in relation to children, the question to ask is How can the roles of men and women in the development of the field of early childhood education be understood as complementary and not as an adversarial dichotomy?

In addition to exploring the characteristics of persons caring for young children, the linkage between female biology and social roles for women, and the persistent dichotomy between men's and women's roles in professional development, a fourth, broader and more comprehensive historical context needs to be examined. The kindergartens, day nurseries, child day care centers, nursury schools and prototypical family day care homes that have emerged during the past 350 years, while largely conceptualized and initially established by men, have relied almost entirely on the contributions of women for the continued operation and expansion of successful schools and programs. With the availability of reasonably priced caregiving institutions, increasingly large numbers of parents have been able to enter and remain in the workforce, while thousands of young children have benefitted from developmentally appropriate experiences planned and implemented by well-educated and trained professional staff and caregivers. In short, an entire profession that has become a cornerstone of the American culture, economy and nation has grown out of the willingnexx of women to do "worthy work" for "worthless wages" and other negative conditions (Child Care Employee Project, 1989).

> Child care is not a luxury. It is an economic necessity. Future economic growth and prosperity depends [sic] on our ability to attract new workers to the labor force, to improve the productivity of those workers already there, and to prepare future generations for success in school and the workforce. (Reisman, Moore & Fitzgerald, 1988, p. 50)

In reviewing selected, critical events that occurred in the 17th century, the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the present time, a final question emerges out of the historical context: Is today's family day care home a continuation of Comenius' 17th century "school of infancy," or is the modern example of home-based child care a new and different thing?

Straightforward responses to the four questions stated above are difficult to obtain in light of the accompanying obstacles as described in the persistent myths associated with each question, myths that must first be understood, then overcome. The questions, together with underlying operating myths, are as follows:

1. What are the fundamental and universal characteristics of persons responsible for rearing and educating young children?

   The Myth of Equality by Association

2. Why have women's roles in early education and in society as a whole, been linked so closely and for so long to the biology and sociology of the home?

   The Myth of Logical Extension

3. How can the roles of men and women in the development of the field of early childhood education be understood as complementary rather than as an adversarial dichotomy?

   The Myth of the False Dichotomy

4. Is today's family day care home a continuation of Comenius' 17th century "school of infancy," or is the modern example of home-based child care a new and different thing?

   The Myth of the 'Rose by Any Other Name . . .'

In the following sections, the underlying assumptions for each question will be examined, and each accompanying myth will be described and recommendations for overcoming the myth will be stated.

Fundamental and Universal Characteristics of Persons Responsible for Rearing and Educating Young Children, or "The Myth of Equality by Association"

Persons responsible for the rearing and educating of children should be expected to possess characteristics capable of making appropriate responses to the basic developmental needs of children. Whether at an individual or collective level, adult responses to children needs should acknowledge both children's individual idiosyncrasies as well as the qualities that are common to all children. For example, children's basic developmental needs have been defined in various ways:

In his discourse on English common law, Blackstone (1793) determined that the parent-child relationship is the "most universal . . . in nature" (p. 446), and, as such, children must be protected, maintained and cared for at a minimal level, and educated in a way that is "suitable to the child's station in life" (p. 450).

Expanding on Blackstone, Ranck (1986) concluded that adults must "identify the ongoing needs of children . . , maintain at the same time a consciousness of prevailing perceptions of childhood, and . . . select and promote the most appropriate programmatic responses" (p. 45). Paraphrasing Blackstone, children's needs fall into three categories: welfare needs, labor needs and education needs. Not surprisingly, adult responses are based on perceptions of children which are universally, and particularly in a pluralistic society, varied. Thus, ways must be forged within the larger society, often by governments, to determine what commonalities can be identified, and which appropriate and acceptable programmatic regulations and curricula can be implemented.

Similarly, but going one step further, Ruddick (1989), a philosopher, has observed that children's "demands" - requirements for life - include preservation (and the response of preservative love), growth (and the response of nurturance), and social acceptibility (and the response of training). Persons who carry out the responses to children's demands are "maternal practitioners who may or may not be mothers." For Ruddick, however, maternal practice is not only what one <u>does</u>; it is also what one <u>thinks</u>:

> The discipline of maternal thought, like other disciplines, establishes criteria for determining failure and success, sets priorities, and identifies virtues that the discipline requires. Like any other work, mothering is prey ot characteristic temptations that it must identify. To describe the capacities, judgments, metaphysical attitudes, and values of maternal thought presumes not maternal achievement, but a <u>conception</u> of achievement. (p. 24)

Most of Western society has failed or refused to recognize that the rearing of children is a viable, discernable and demanding discipline. Women are expected to become mothers, and if not in actuality, to be able to care for children as something natural and inherently present. Teachers of young children <u>may</u> receive limited recognition; teachers at least are expected to become professional and to possess or develop specific characteristics for teaching: a love of learning and teaching, a familiarity with open-ended learning experiences, an ability to separate personal and professional needs, a knowledge of how young children learn best, and a willingness to work cooperatively with parents of young children (Gross, 1967).

In the American culture, sad to say, the great qualities of maternal practice and early childhood teaching lack serious rewards, apparently in the belief that maternal work is simple and easy (Howe, quoted in Ruddick, 1989, p. 33), or that women love to care for little children and willingly do the work for little or no remuneration (Child Care Employee Project, 1989; Galbraith, 1973). As a consequence of such an attitude, an unconscious association of child-like characteristics between women and children is established, putting both into such categories as small, weak, vulnerable, in need of protection and help, silly, emotional, and arational.

A surprising (apparent) linkage that seems to support the confluence of women and children is the similarity between constructivist styles of thinking as described by DeVries & Kohlberg (1987) for young children, and by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) as women's ways of knowing. Both styles favor the dynamic aspects of educational dialectics over against the static qualities (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 237-38). As in Hitt's (1969) comparison between behaviorism and phenomenology, two opposing worldviews appear as learning styles; Belenky et al. observed that ". . . knowledge is constructed, not given; contextual, not absolute; mutable, not fixed. It is within relativism that . . . the affirmation of personal identity and commitment evolves" (p. 10). DeVries & Kohlberg (1987), in describing the cognitive-development style of early education, suggest that

> . . . Knowledge evolves from an internal psychological core through an interaction or dialogue with the physical and social environment rather than by direct biological, natural or direct learning of external givens from the environment. . . . The cognitive-developmental stream of thought emphasizes the child as a philosopher or scientist-poet who progressively reorganizes knowledge on the basis of a personal "reading" of experience (p. 7)

In noting the similarities in learning styles and acknowledging the continuum on which the styles are placed, it is also necessary to distinguish between adults of both sexes and the children for whom individually and together as a society, they are responsible for socializing into the broader culture. "Women are primarily human beings" and as such display the same range of feelings, beliefs and attitudes as men. The operating myth of equation by association has been used, whether consciously or otherwise, to restrict women and deny children of deserved resources, even to the extent of impeding personal and social development:

> It is likely that the commonly accepted stereotype of women's thinking as emotional, intuitive, and personalized has contributed to the devaluation of women's minds and contributions. It is generally assumed that intuitive knowledge is more primitive, therefore less valuable, than so-called objective modes of knowing. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 6)

Overcoming the Myth of Equality by Association. To operate on the belief that women and children are more alike than otherwise, and that their likenesses are inferior and of less value than other characteristics is to perpetuate the limitations on resources available to women and children. Decisions about allocating scarce resources for early education and child care programs will be tardy, if made at all, and will fail to meet the level of actual need.

To overcome the myth, women and men who subscribe to constructivist styles of learning, teaching and working will have to work together consciously, individually and in organizations, to develop positions of strength and demonstrate the short- and long-term effectiveness of cooperative and

cognitive-developmental learning. Published articles should be identified and distributed to colleagues, students, professors of education students, and early education and child care practitioners. Finally, the classroom and other programmatic experiences of all young children must reflect the characteristics of constructivist learning and depart from more rigid education styles:

> The teacher moving toward the constructivist worldview frequently has to shift the focus of thinking from instruction to construction, from reinforcement to interest, and from obedience to autonomy. . . . Finally, it culminates in the autonomy that comes from a solid network of convictions that are both practical and theoretical and leads to taking responsibility for the education offered to children. (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 396)

The Persistent Link Between Female Biology, Home and Family Constructs, and Professional Roles for Women, or "The Myth of Logical Extension"

Women who follow the myth of Logical Extension enter the labor market, if they do work, through jobs, and even careers, that require the same or similar skills as needed by work within the home; in all likelihood, the job skills are related to women's sexuality (Chafe, 1972). Opponents of this more restrictive view of men and women claim that only at the most elementary levels are men and women put in separate spheres; in all else, either can be productive in the work that is fulfilling and which capitalizes on individual skills and aptitudes. Such a feminist perspective contradicts "one of the cornerstones of society" (p. 10) and "most Americans [in the early 20th century] reacted to such a prospect with understandable hostility" (p. 10).

The hostility or the reaction to it has roots. Comenius, whose modern ideas for co-education in the lower grades are frequently cited, reflects the 17th century's pervasive and persistent cultural milieu when he quotes Hippolytus in The Great Didactic: "May there never be a women in my house who knows more than is fitting for a woman to know" (Comenius, 1923, p. 68). Comenius' own idea about education for girls diminishes considerably in its context:

> We are not advising that women be educated in such a way that their tendency to curiosity shall be developed, but so that their sincerity and contentedness may be increased, and this chiefly in those things which it becomes a woman to know and to do: that is to say, all that enables her to look after her household and to promote the welfare of her husband and her family (p. 68)

More on Comenius' views of women and children appears below.

Other examples of mothers "working" with children include Pestalozzi's Gertrude, the good mother (1898/1781), and the dame or "infant school," described by Cremin (1980) as "a quasi-domestic environment under the supervision of a quasi-maternal female teacher" (p. 389). Gradually, the mothering role took on additional professional characteristics: Froebel's kindergartners (the teachers) were trained to become a version of the good mother. In the second half of the 19th century, American kindergartners attended training programs and became certified kindergarten teachers (Snyder, 1972, p. 72).

As social, educational and health-related services moved out of the home into community agencies and governmental domains (Demos, 1970), specific training became necessary and eventually professions evolved: among them the rise of settlement houses and its related field of social work (Addams, 1935/1910; Costin, 1985; Lunenberg, 1990; Snyder, 1972). The young, affluent, well-educated and travelled women who established and staffed the early settlement house in turn had a powerful impact, not only on the residents of the neighbor hoods in which they were situated, but also on upcoming professional women. For example, Jane Addams in Chicago helped the professional development of Edith and Grace Abbott (Costin, 1983) and Lucy Sprague Mitchell, a Chicago native and founder of Bank Street College (Antler, 1987; Greenberg, 1987).

Trolander reports that settlement house work and its academic field of social work changed as time went on into the 20th century. No one lived in the houses anymore and the effect of neighborhood bonding cultivated by the women settlement house leaders shifted toward political activism and funding efforts, tasks more readily identified with the men who became the subsequent leaders. Trolander (1987) credits the professional shift from women to men to a change in the cultural ideal of women after the passage of the 19th amendment giving the women the right to vote. Feminism became archaic and interest in women's issues waned.

As one moves away from the home both philosophically and geographically, jobs and careers become increasingly masculine and filled by men, while those in the neighborhood and the town are more likely to attract women. Although this pattern has changed somewhat in the years of affirmative action, one still finds the tendency for men to teach older students and for women to work with young children: in the Child Care Employee Project (1989), 97 percent of the teaching staffs interviewed were female.

Overcoming the Myth of the Logical Extension. In view of the feminist perspective that anyone can do anything with aptitude, skills and commitment to the job, two conditions appear to be influential in any effort to overcome the Myth of Logical Extension: one addresses the economics of consumption (Galbraith, 1973) and the other examines the differences in the ways that men and women think and know (Belenky et al., 1986).

Galbraith describes an invisible condition in which fundamental social attitudes are formed, that of the Convenient Social Virtue which

> ascribes merit to any pattern of behavior, however uncomfortable or unnatural for the individual involved, that serves the comfort or well-being of, or is otherwise advantageous for, the more powerful members of the community. The moral commendation of the community for convenient and therefore virtuous behavior then serves as a substitute for pecuniary compensation. Inconvenient behavior becomes deviant behavior and is subject to the righteous disapproval or sanction of the community (p. 30)

The myths cited in this paper are established by social conditioning, a conversion to menial personal service, acquiescence in the crypto-servant functions of consumption administration, as natural responsibilities of women - women "hitchhikes on her sense of duty and her capacity for affection" (p. 36) the characteristics cited in The Great Didactic of the 17th century: "a uniquely moral women who devotes herself to the well-being of her family . ... and is a gracious helpmeet . . . ." (pp. 36-37). To the extent that the convenient social virtue operates in families, communities or societies, the role of consumer (rather than creator) "is . . . [women's] supreme contribution to the modern economy" (p. 37).

In carrying out the research for Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky et al. found five different levels or stages of learning that were typical of most women. Of the five, the most poignant one that of silence, at which stage women tend to be powerless, limited to the present, the actual, the concrete, and the specific (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 27). To the extent that women are silent or effectively silenced or diminished, the schools and families have failed to meet their needs. Out of fear, ignorance or distrust, women cling to past experiences, unable to move into new arenas to take up new and different tasks. Overcoming the Myth of Logical Extension means to push the weak one from the nest, to force the taking of a college science course, and to subscribe to compulsory education.

Women working with young children, regardless of location, demand attention and respect if these characteristics of women's work are to be overcome, thereby freeing women to work according to style and interest and effort, and not because they are women and so must do "women's work." Early education experiences must not only permit non-sexist behaviors; examples of power in learning a skill and understanding a story are also needed.

Overcoming this myth of Logical Extension means to raise sights on more distant horizons, to experience one's own self and trusting in it's abilities to function in a familiar or strange environment, and at the same time include women's skills and mother's work (Ruddick, 1989).

Roles of Men and Women in the Development of the Field of Early Childhood Education or The Myth of the False Dichotomy

In the paper so far, the topics addressed dramatize the effects of relying on false dichotomies to determine professional roles: distorted limitations are set on self-knowledge and self-development, energy is diverted from building bridges and expanding the environment to maintaining walls and ceilings, and truth is restricted or hidden away.

An examination of the development of the field of early childhood education (Borstelmann, 1983; Braun & Edwards, 1973; Fein & Clarke-Stewart, 1973, Kessen, 1965) reveals a curious piece of knowledge: while work with young children is usually thought of as women's work, most of the early founders and subsequent leaders are men, not women. Lists of key names in books like those named above are generally composed of the same persons, by and large men. Women, on the other hand, when they are mentioned at all in the literature, appear to be the doers, the implementers. For example, Dauntless Women in Early Childhood Education, 1856-1931 presents biographies of 10 women in early childhood, kindergartens mostly, established during the last quarter of the 19th century. Most of them are not well known, even to educators (very few of the women featured in Dauntless Women are found in the four books named above).

Furthermore, women also face the dilemma of having to deal with different styles of leadership at the same time they try to work cooperatively with men. Conroy (1971/72) has described two types of 19th century-early 20th century woman social reformer. One Conroy calls the "sage" who, while carrying out good works, nevertheless "led to an unfortunate association of critical perceptions of society with unquestioning acceptance of traditional views of the female psyche" (p. 169). Women who are sages, such as Jane Addams, did not "question traditional views of femininity" and thus "the genuine changes in behavior and the impact of women's social criticism were short-lived" (p. 174).

Sages did not threaten the status quo for women were seen as special albeit traditional in their work:

> . . . Women [were] civilizing and moralizing forces in society . . . . Yet, within American society there was no naturally occurring social milieu in which these assumptions about the exclusive attributes of woemn could be seen for what they were. Women had to create the very institutions which were their vehicle for departure from the middle-class feminine life, and in doing so they naturally duplicated existing assumptions about the sexes and their roles (p. 174).

Fruitful research in how this pattern has emerged, if at all or if yet, in the field of early education and child care needs to be conducted. The idea of the influence of men's and women's disparate roles on the field suggests that that the lack of prestige and limited resources may be linked to the fact that women have not historically made the transference from personalized child caring to the professional delivery of services.

On the other hand, Conroy also identified the social reformer or engineer, the women behind the scenes working diligently and self-consciously to change the structure of society on terms the male leadership could understand. That many were politically-oriented to federal government is not suprising; Julia Lathrop and Grace Abbott in particular functioned in the capacity of change-makers for children and families (Costin, 1983). Social engineers are less recognized outside their field than their colleagues the sages; the public personae of each type of women is quite different from the other.

The two leadership styles - sage and social engineer - point up clearly the inherent human need to bifurcate at the same time people attempt to put ideas back together. The roles for women and for women and men may be paradoxical, distinctive and plagued by limited time and other resources. At the same time, the roles are also a great deal alike. In both cases, it will be necessary for women to maintain consciousness about their roles in professional development and to construct relationships among other women and with men that carry a strong feminist perspective:

> The presence of a feminist movement may be essential for women to maintain their position within a profession. (Trolander, 1987, p. 63)

Family Day Care: A Continuation of Comenius' 17th Century 'School of Infancy or Something New and Different? - A Radical Role for Women or "The Myth of 'A Rose by Any Other Name"

In playing the various roles associated with the development and implementation of early education and child care programs, women have often been faced with the dilemma of having to choose from among the the available roles, rather than combining the several aspects. As a consequence, women have often suffered the effects of long-standing, operating myths which negatively impact on women's efforts to build relationships with their own children and with those of other people. Each of the myths in some way has served to restrict, deprive, neglect or distort the development of women and their relationships:

1. Equality by Association. Decision-makers who view women and children through the same lens tend to devalue both the women and the children, to resist, restrict or refuse allocations of scarce resources to programs that provide long-term support to children and women. As a result of inappropriate assumptions about the role of women in society, persons in power often deny or ignore women's capacity to think and plan, to organize and execute, and to review and revise, in short, to function optimally as a human being.

2. Logical Extension. When women's labor force options are restricted only to work that appears to extend logically from home-based duties and sexual determinants, employers, educational institutions and society ignore the possibility of personal growth and expression, and fail to encourage to opt for career moves that build on abilities, aptitudes and desires.

Human resources are wasted and optimum development is denied. The marked increase in the number of women employed in fields historically closed to women to any significant extent has neither eliminated sexual harrassment in the workplace nor erradicated the "glass ceiling" phenomenon which prevents otherwise qualified women from promotion to the highest management levels.

3. False Dichotomy. Choosing a single position on an issue appears to make life simple by eliminating the need to think through complex ideas and to live with the consequences of a decision. Adult life, however, is too intricately constructed for easy answers to suffice; ultimately, the false dichotomy fails to fulfill the promise of rational thought and closure.

Furthermore, women must not only address the male/female differences that have historically plagued intelligent and ambitious people; they must also recognize the variety of roles that inhabit women's professional spheres. As Conroy (1983) has pointed out, the woman as "sage" and as "social engineer" are not totally separate: Jane Addams contributed significantly to the development of social work and family-related professions. Lucy Sprague Mitchell relentlessly evaluated her own career and family efforts in her efforts to meet her own needs, and those of her husband and children (Antler, 1987).

In order for women to escape the confines decreed by the myths of restriction, resistance and rejection, a new paradigm is needed to combine the roles of women in early education and child care. Such a paradigm for women's roles will include the following characteristics:

1. Acknowledge women's capacity for learning and knowing, promote a constructivist though process, and guide women toward other segments of the community;

2. Acknowledge women's need for self-care and growth, and for the capacity for caring about and educating both children and adults, along with the encouragement of training and formal education; and

3. Acknowledge women's capacity for functioning as manager, administrator, thinker, planner, leader, organizer, executive, family member, colleague, friend, advisor, community volunteer, religious beliver, etc.

Such a paradigm, while having its roots in the past and its immediate concerns connected to the present, will also focus on the future through goals, objectives, and activities.

While women's capacity for and styles of learning inform any work done, careers in early education and child care are particularly strong examples of women's work frequently tied to the three myths of equality by association, logical extention, and false dichotomy. In examining the range of careers in which women work with and teach young children, one early education and child care style in particular can function as a paradigm for a radical role for women in the field. Family day care, while appearing to be a form of care

most closely linked to home and mothering, is in fact the oldest form of early education and child care and the one that offers the greatest opportunity for role development at the present time (Dimidjian, 1982; Ranck, 1984; Washburn & Washburn, 1985).

Family day care is defined as the "care in her or his own home to a small group of children. . . . Family day care is [usually] limited to six or fewer children" (Modigliani, 1987, p. viii). But family day care is much more than babysitting; a provider building a career in early education and child care will also obtain advanced training, participate in in-service courses, develop written program policies; organize formal and informal activities with the children, join a professional organization (at least one), and take advantage of regulations and fulfill mandated requirements.

In the United States at the present time, family day care has captured the attention of groups not directly involved in the care and education field: municipal planners, insurance companies, voluntary organizations, and corporations. The number of national publications, professional organizations and annual national conferences is steadily increasing. Modigliani and Squibb (1980) are but two of a growing body of knowledge about family day care. For example, a family day care provider was recently elected to the governing board of the nation's largest comprehensive early education and child care professional organization.

The roots of this remarkable segment of the early education and child care field go back to the 17th century, to Comenius' school of infancy (1956/1633) and the Protestant reformation as it occurred in the English Puritan Revolution. The changes in the English conceptions of the monarcy and the structure of the state also elevated the family as the basic unit of society and "created the home as 'a little church, a little commonwealth, a little school'" (Ranck, 1986, quoting Demos, 1970, epigraph; and Walzer, 1965, p. 191). In particular, the parental roles and the position of the child received more attention in the modern world. Comenius examines closely the new vision in which children are valued for themselves and especially as children of God. The child must be encouraged by the mother within the home during the child's first six years to learn about all aspects of the wider world and to do so in a climate of pleasantness, informality and respect for the child's youth.

Is today's family day care home a continuation and replication of the "school of infancy" or "maternal school," or are there distinctions between them? It is suggested here that today's family day care home, while deriving its origins in the 17th century that ushered in the modern age. has also evolved into a more complex example of programs for the education and care of children. In part this is based on the unique series of events of the emerging modern age that provided opportunities for career expansion for parents, esepcially women. The example of the development of radical politics described by Walzer (1965) in The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics summarizes the changes that took place in 17th century England and in other parts of Europe as well.

Walzer's description of the rise of radical politics captures the Puritan emphasis on change in government structure, society at large, and in the family itself. The quotations from Walzer given below are followed by an application of the quotation to family day care, thus establishing the context for a radical role for women in the current field of early education and child care:

* All forms of radical politics make their appearance at moments of rapid and decisive change, moments when customary status is in doubt and character (or "identity") is itself a problem. (p. 315)

  Events in our time occur with amazing speed, and are particularly dramatic for women; in this kind of rapid social and political change radical roles can emerge and take hold. Early education and child care, although not new, have entered a heightened phase of popularity expanded presence. The possibility for radical professional development is as great as it has ever been.

* [Radical politics is] the detached appraisal of a going system, the programmatic expression of discontent and aspiration, the organization of zealous men for sustained political activity. (p. 1)

  Family day care professionals are examining the going early education and child care system, offering criticism and recommendations for change, and organizing within and across professional lines in order to establish sustained professional development.

* At a certain point in the transition from [a] form of traditional society . . . to [a] fomr of modern society, there appears a band of "strangers" who view themselves as chosen men, saints, and who seek a new order in an impersonal, ideological discipline. (p. 317)

  Family day care professionals have banded together to establish national organizations at the same time efforts are made to reach out to older, established organizations. Family day caregivers and advocates continue to seek out their new rationale for existence and and persevere in defining and implementing an "ideological discipline.

* Members [of the band or profession] interpret the strains and tensions of social change in terms of conflict and contention. Sensing enmity, they train and prepare themselves, keeping watch and continually calculating their chances. (p. 317)

  Finally, family day care professionals recognize that others may resent the presence of family day care programs in the community, may resist the perceived encroachment on established center- and school-based programs, and may refuse to participate in collaborative efforts. Family day caregivers, sensing the need to improve and develop professionally, prepare themselves, "continually calculating their chances" to contribute to the early education and child care field.

Walzer describes the work of the new group (what he calls "saints") much like family day care professionals perceive themselves and their work: purposive, programmatic, goal-oriented, without regard to established efforts, methodical, systematic, full of commitment, disciplines, patient, hard, and concerned with detail (from p. 318).

Family day care as it exists today offers a radical paradigm for a new role for women in the field of early education and child care: it consolidates the fundamental and universal characteristics of persons who care for and educate young children; it continues the vital biological, social and political links between women and traditional roles at the same time it provides for the development as a professional quite aside from the biological and social concerns associated with women and home; it recognizes the abilities of women and men to enter and participate in significant personal and professional relationships, at the same time it offers both sexes opportunities to excel as a person, expand as a professional, and enlighten as a caregiver and teacher; and, finally, family day care recognizes its physical and philosophical roots in the 17th century. In maintaining its links with Comenius and the radical events of that era at the same time new roles are forged for the present and foreseeable future, family day care acknowledges that "a rose by any other name" would convey the characteristics of a rose.

In conclusion, family day care has emerged as a particularly strong flower in the community of nursery schools and kindergartens. Recognizing its roots in earlier centuries and nurturing its professionalization in the present time, family day care continues to improve and expand, becoming an ever-larger participant in the early education and child care field and offering women a radical rol both in personal and professional development.

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