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ABSTRACT

Men are taking a more active role in child care. By 1991, 20% of preschool children were cared for by their fathers while their mothers worked outside the home--an increase since 1988, when only 15 percent of preschoolers were cared for by their fathers. This report summarizes the latest findings on child care arrangements of mothers who work outside the home and explores the trend in father-provided child care since the late 1970s. Discussions cover the following topics: (1) fathers as child care providers; (2) family changes in child care arrangements; (3) child care costs; (4) parental employment; (5) family work schedules; (6) parental availability for child care; (7) the need to juggle work and child care; (8) characteristics of fathers who are likely to become child care providers; (9) single mothers; and (10) trends in paternal child care. The findings reveal that fathers are the single most important source of family-provided child care for preschool children when mothers work outside the home, and that changes in the United States economy since 1988 have made paternal child care both more feasible and more of a household necessity. Current trends suggest that flexible work hours and work arrangements may encourage more fathers to play stronger roles in providing child care for their children. (SM)

Where's Papa!
thers' Role in Child Care

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Where's Papa? Fathers' Role in Child Care is the twentieth report in a series of occasional papers, *Population Trends and Public Policy*, published by the Population Reference Bureau, Inc. The series is devoted to demographic issues of concern to policymakers.

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Fathers' Role in Child Care

By Martin O'Connell

Executive Summary

Men are taking a more active role in child care. By 1991, one of every five preschool children (under age 5) were cared for by their fathers while their mothers worked outside the home. This represents a sharp increase since 1988 when only 15 percent of preschoolers were cared for by their fathers. Prior to 1988, the share of father-provided child care remained stable at around 15 percent for more than a decade.

Where's Papa? Fathers' Role in Child Care reports the latest findings on child care arrangements of mothers who work outside the home and explores the trend in father-provided child care since the late 1970s. Among the findings:

- For preschool children, fathers are the single most important source of family-provided child care when mothers work outside the home. A larger share of preschoolers are cared for by their fathers than by their grandparents or by other relatives. Just over half of all preschool children are cared for by either a family member living in the household or a nearby relative.
- For school-age children, the primary source of care while mothers are at work is the formal school system. Fathers are the next most likely source of care.

- Changes in the U.S. economy since 1988 have made paternal child care both more feasible and more of a household necessity. Unemployment, a growing number of parents who work part-time or non-day work schedules, and the high cost of child care contributed to the rise in father-provided child care.
- Among preschoolers with fathers experiencing long-term unemployment, 56 percent had fathers who were the principal child care provider while their mothers were away at work. Children whose fathers worked night shifts were twice as likely as those with fathers on day shifts to be cared for by their dad—30 percent versus 17 percent.
- While the economy may have partly accounted for the rise in father-provided child care between 1988 and 1991, the proportion of children cared for by fathers with full-time, day-time jobs also increased—from 14 to 17 percent.
- The cost of child care remains high. Among families with children under age 15 who pay for child care services, annual costs amounted to $3,300 per year in 1991, or $63 per week.
- Families with incomes below the poverty line who pay for child care spent more than one-fourth of their monthly incomes (27 percent) on child care in 1991. Families above the poverty line spent about 7 percent of their family incomes on child care.
- Wives are more likely than husbands to adjust their work schedule to accommodate child care needs. Even in families where the father is the primary child care provider while the mother is at work, 40 percent of mothers adjusted their work hours to meet child care needs, compared with only 6 percent of the fathers.

It may be too early to predict if the trend toward more father-provided child care will continue or reverse itself with future changes in the economy. The projected expansion of jobs in the female-dominated service sector, unless accompanied by increases in affordable child care, could potentially increase pressure on fathers to share in daily child care activities. Flexible work hours and work arrangements, along with the newly enacted Family and Medical Leave Act, may encourage more fathers to play stronger roles in providing child care for their children.

Introduction

Economic changes affect the lives of families in ways beyond their immediate jobs and earnings. During adverse economic circumstances, the roles of husbands and wives as breadwinners and child care providers may be reversed. The loss of a job, a reduction in the number of hours worked, or a change in school hours can upset the delicate balance of family child care arrangements. In many cases, the principal income provider becomes the principal child care provider when it is the other spouse's turn to go to work.

Between 1965 and 1988, fathers served as primary child care providers for about one of every seven preschool-age children whose mothers worked at paid jobs.[1] But new data from the Census Bureau's 1991 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), found the proportion of fathers who were primary child care providers increased sharply. For the first time, one of every five preschoolers (under age 5) had their father at home with them while their mother was at work.

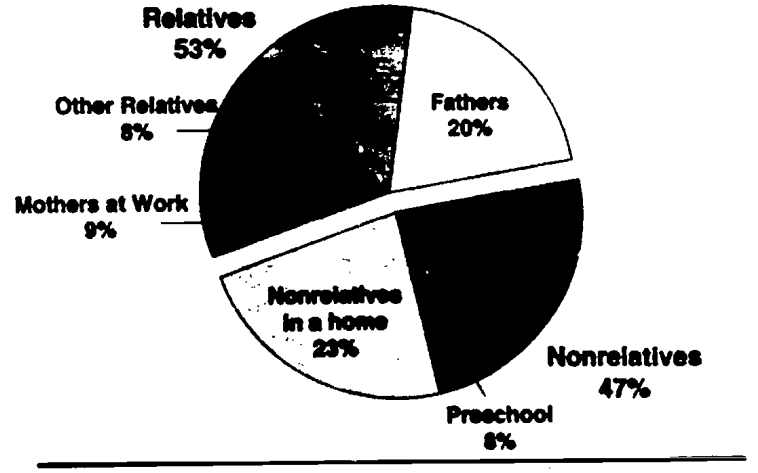
SIPP, a nationally representative, longitudinal data set, suggests how families adjust their child care arrangements within a changing economy as women with children join the labor force, child care costs increase, and employment opportunities for men undergo change.[2] This report examines the increasing importance of fathers as child care providers. It explores whether this trend signals the beginning of long-term changes in gender roles or only reflects a short-term impact on the traditional balance of men's work with their family responsibilities.

Because infants and toddlers are most vulnerable to changes in child care situations, preschoolers will receive most of the attention in this report. The term "child care arrangement" describes how children were cared for during the time their mothers were at work. Although some parents may use more than one arrangement for each child, the figures shown here are only for the primary arrangement, that is, the arrangement used most often during a typical week as described by the parents.

Fathers as Child Care Providers

Fathers are a key component of family child care arrangements. More than half of all preschool children with mothers who worked outside the home in 1991 were cared for by a relative or family member (see Figure 1). Fathers

Figure 1. Primary Care Providers for Preschool Children While Mothers Work, 1991



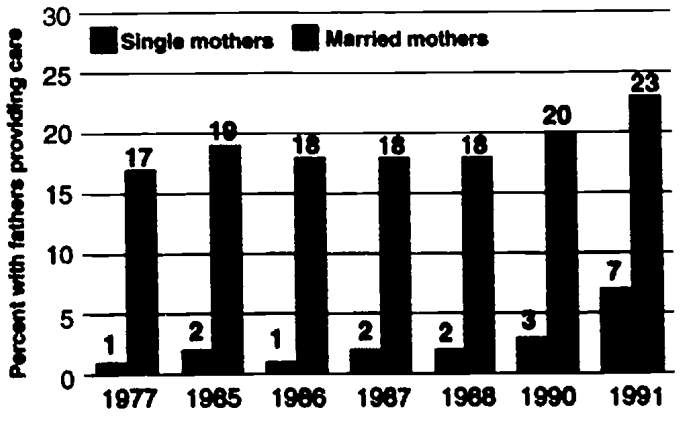
Note: Includes all children under age 5 whose mothers are employed.
"Preschool" includes children in kindergarten programs.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

were the single most important source of that care. Their share overshadowed that of grandparents and of other relatives.

Among married couples, fathers have provided child care on a scale equal to or greater than that provided by the child's grandparents or by child care centers since 1977 (see Table A-1, page 17). The percent of children in father-provided care increased from 17 to 23 percent between 1977 and 1991. During the same period, the share of children in child care centers rose from less than 10 percent to almost 16 percent, while the share cared for by grandparents remained fairly steady between 12 and 14 percent.

Increases in paternal child care arrangements were also noted for the children of single mothers (that is, divorced, separated, or never-married women) who worked outside the home. Until 1988, only 1 to 2 percent of preschool-age children of single mothers had their fathers as primary child care providers while their mothers were working. In fall 1991, 7 percent were in this arrangement (see Figure 2). This change is quite remarkable considering the problems single mothers often face in securing child-support payments from absent fathers. For single mothers, the child's grandparents play a significant role in providing care: since 1977, between 20 and 25 percent of preschool children of single mothers were cared for by their grandparents (see Table A-1).

Figure 2. Preschoolers Whose Fathers Provide Care by Mothers' Marital Status, 1977-1991



Note: Limited to children under age 5 of employed women.
All data are for the period September to December (fall) except for June 1977 and winter 1985.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Somewhat different patterns of child care arrangements were observed for school-age children (see Table A-2, page 19). About 80 percent of children ages 5 to 14 in 1991 were in school or school-based activities while their parents worked. Fathers, however, were the next most likely source of care. Seven percent of school-age children were cared for by their fathers while their mothers worked. This percentage has held steady since the mid-1980s. Grandparents and other relatives, combined, provided care for 5 percent of school-age children in 1991, while nonrelatives represented 2 percent of care. About 3 percent of school-age children cared for themselves while their parents worked.

Why Families Change Child Care Arrangements

Almost one-quarter of the children in the 1991 survey changed their child care arrangements within the previous year. The reasons families offered for changing child

care arrangements differed depending on the child's age (see Table 1). Parents of preschool-age children cited issues such as cost of care, availability, and location of the provider more frequently than those of older children.

In one of every six cases, parents of preschoolers mentioned that their former arrangement was no longer available, thereby requiring a change to another provider. Changes in mothers' work schedules were also cited more frequently for younger than older children. This could reflect the fact that a somewhat greater proportion of women with preschoolers work part-time (37 percent) than do women with school-age children (31 percent). Part-time workers may experience more instability in their jobs and work schedules.

Parents of school-age children reported that almost two-thirds of the changes in child care arrangements occurred because of a change in the child's school schedule. The transition from summer to school-year schedules and various school holidays often necessitate changes in child care arrangements. Fewer than 5 percent mentioned concerns such as reliability, quality, or even cost as reasons for changing child care arrangements for a school-age child.

Child Care Costs

Among families paying for child care services in 1991, the average weekly cost for a child under age 15 was $63, up from $40 in 1985. At this level, child care costs amounted to $3,300 per year per family in 1991. Even after controlling for inflation, weekly child care costs increased by about $11 between 1985 and 1991. On an hourly basis, child care costs in 1991 averaged about $2 per hour.

Child care expenses also claimed a growing share of monthly family income. Child care represented 7.1 percent of family income in 1991, up slightly from 6.3 percent in 1985.

Table 1. Reasons for Changing Child Care Arrangement, 1991

	All children	Children under age 5	Children ages 5-14
Number of children*	31,074	9,854	21,220
Number making a change*	7,062	1,728	5,334
Reason for change (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Child's school schedule	51.4	11.5	64.4
Mother's work schedule	5.9	11.3	4.2
Mother's school schedule	3.5	2.5	3.8
Cost of care	4.5	8.3	3.2
Availability of provider	7.7	15.8	5.1
Reliability of provider	2.4	4.8	1.6
Quality of care	1.7	4.6	0.8
Location of provider	3.4	7.3	2.2
Better/less expensive/ more convenient provider	4.7	8.6	3.5
Never had a regular provider	1.3	2.2	1.0
Child outgrew arrangement	2.0	1.1	2.3
Arrangement no longer available	6.4	16.7	3.0
All other reasons	25.0	34.7	21.8

* Numbers in thousands

Note: Percentages total to more than 100 percent because of multiple answers

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991 Survey of Income and Program Participation

For low-income families, child care expenses are a major portion of the family budget. Low-income families (those with incomes less than $1,500 per month) spent over one-fifth of their income on child

Figure 3. Percent of Monthly Family Income Spent on Child Care: Fall 1991

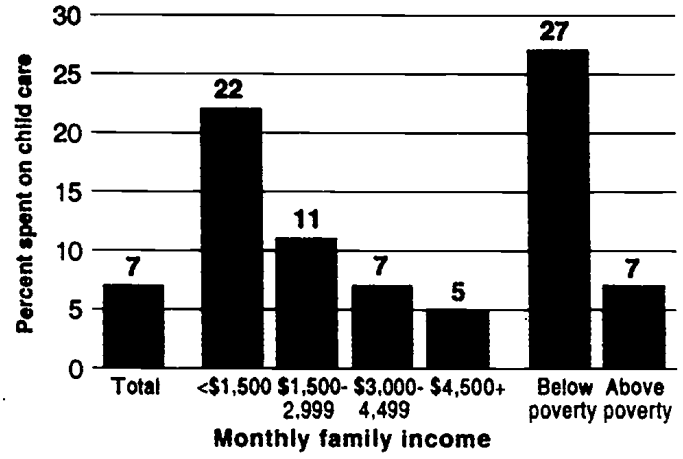
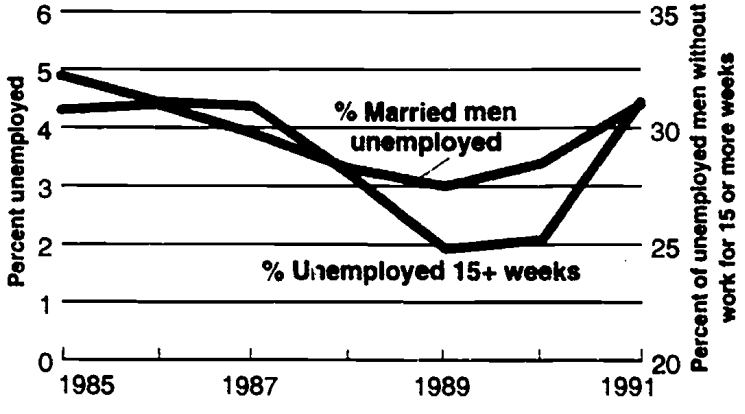


Figure 4. Unemployment Measures, 1985 to 1991



care—about three to four times more than what higher-income families spent (see Figure 3). Families whose incomes were below the poverty level in 1991 spent more than one-quarter of their incomes (27 percent) on child care, as compared with 7 percent for families above the poverty level. The average weekly cost of child care was similar for the two groups: families below the poverty line spent an average of $60 per week on child care compared with about $64 per week reported by families above the poverty line.

Most families (65 percent) in 1991 did not pay for child care services. Unpaid arrangements, such as neighbors, friends, or family members who look after one another's children, are quite common. Also, many parents try to schedule their work hours during the time when older children are in school.

Rising costs, however, may have encouraged some families to look for unpaid arrangements because the number of families paying for child care declined between 1988 and 1991. Families switching to father as the primary child care provider may have contributed to this decline. The proportion of families paying for child care dropped from 40 percent in 1988 to 35 percent in 1991—about the same proportion (34 percent) that paid for child care in 1985.[7]

The high cost of child care may have led some lower-income families to find unpaid child care arrangements. Thirty-seven percent of families with monthly incomes of $3,000 or more in

1991 paid for child care compared to 32 percent for families in lower income brackets. Families below the poverty line were least likely to pay for care. Only one-quarter (24 percent) of families with incomes below poverty paid for child care compared with one-third (36 percent) of families above poverty.

The Employment Picture

Beyond the cost of child care, parents must find care that is compatible with their work and family schedules. The changing labor force environment has a significant influence on the type of child care arrangement that parents select for their children.

When both parents are employed, work schedules play an important part in determining which parent, if any, is available to provide child care. If one parent should become unemployed, it is logical to assume that the unemployed parent may take on primary child care responsibilities. Figure 4 illustrates the unemployment situation between 1985 and 1991, a period that showed an increasing share of children being cared for by their fathers.

The unemployment rate for married men stood at 4.3 percent in 1985. It gradually dipped to 3.0 percent by 1989, but shot up again to 4.4 percent by 1991. What is more, as unemployment rates increased, a larger percentage of the unemployed found themselves jobless for long periods of time. By 1991, 31 percent of unemployed men were long-term unemployed, that is, without work for 15 weeks or more.

The rising trend in unemployment rates between 1989 and 1991 suggests that more fathers would become primary child care providers—which indeed, happened. But unemployment rates do not tell the whole story. Unemployment measures in 1991 were roughly on a par with those of 1985, both in terms of the level of unemployment as well as the percent experiencing long-term unemployment. Yet, father-provided child care was more common in 1991 than in 1985. In 1985, only 16 percent of preschoolers were cared for by their fathers while their mothers worked, compared with 20 percent in fathers' care in 1991. Increasing numbers of fathers providing child care, therefore, cannot be linked solely to increases in unemployment, although unemployment was a contributing factor and no doubt created financial strains on the ability of families to pay for child care services.

Defining Full-time and Day-shift Jobs

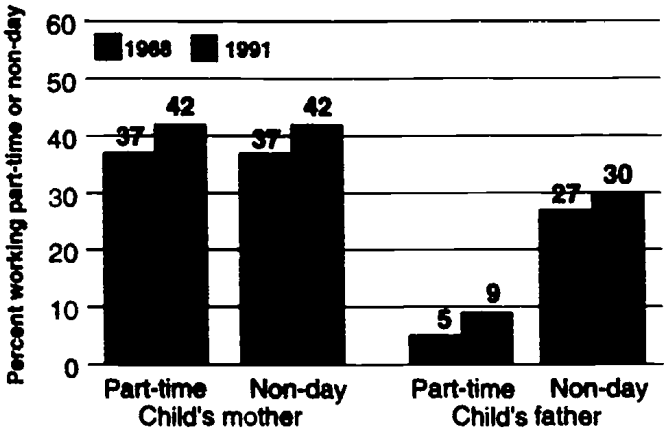
Persons who usually work 35 or more hours per week at their principal job are classified as full-time workers, while those working fewer hours are part-time workers. A day-shift work schedule is one where at least one-half of the hours worked fall between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on a regular basis. All other work schedules outside this time period are classified as non-day shifts.

Family Work Schedules

Changing work patterns also contributed to the increasing share of children cared for by their fathers. Between 1988 and 1991, a growing number of parents began working part-time and non-day shifts (see Figure 5). The proportion of young children whose mothers worked in part-time jobs increased from 37 to 42 percent, and the share of children whose fathers worked part-time rose from 5 to 9 percent.

Fewer children in dual-earner families had both parents working full-time, day-time shifts in 1991 than in 1988. Of the 8 million preschoolers of employed mothers in 1991, 2.4 million (30 percent) had both parents working similar day-shift hours at a full-time schedule. This compares to 34 percent of preschoolers in 1988.*

Figure 5. Percent of Preschoolers Whose Parents Work Part-time or Non-day, 1988 and 1991



* ... related to children under age 5 of employed women in married-couple families.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation

More dual-earner families were juggling their work days and work schedules to meet both employment and child care needs.

Non-day work shifts also became more prevalent. Forty-two percent of preschoolers in 1991 had mothers who worked non-day shifts compared to 37 percent in 1988. Non-day shift work among the fathers of preschoolers also increased from 27 to 30 percent during that time (see Figure 5).

About 5 percent of the preschoolers with employed mothers had fathers who experienced long-term unemployment in 1991—that is, no job for at least four months prior to the survey. A father's unemployment may strain the family's ability to pay for child care and put pressure on the wife to extend her work hours to bring in additional income. Financial pressures could lead a family to rely on the father for child care in order to reduce family expenses. In both 1991 and 1988, about half of all children whose fathers were out of work for four or more months were cared for by their dads.

Parental Availability for Child Care

As parents' work schedules changed, more preschoolers were in families where the father became the likely candidate for principal child care provider. If a father works part-time, the number of hours that he is potentially available for child care increases. Conversely, if the mother works part-time, the number of hours that child care, provided by others, is needed will decrease.

Children whose parents worked part-time were more likely to have their fathers as child care provider than children whose parents worked full-time. About 30 percent of children whose mothers or fathers were part-time workers in 1991 had their fathers as primary care providers, compared to no more than 20 percent of children whose parents were full-time workers (see Table 2). In 1988, father care was also more common among children whose parents worked part-time.

Similarly, fathers providing child care was a more common arrangement among children whose parents worked non-day shifts than those with parents working day shifts. In fact, children whose mothers worked non-day shifts in 1991 were more than twice as likely to have their fathers as care providers than children whose mothers worked day shifts (36 versus 14 percent).

The highest levels of father-provided child care tend to occur when parents work complementary shifts, that is, one parent works during the day and the other at night, as shown in Figure 6, page 10. Thirty-seven percent of preschoolers had their fathers as primary child care providers when their mothers worked a non-day shift and their fathers worked a day shift. Paternal child care for preschoolers was especially low (about 5 percent) when both mother and father worked overlapping day shifts. Flexible work hours and complementary work shifts seem to be crucial components in the increased participation of fathers in child care.

The overall increase in the share of children cared for by their fathers while their mothers worked was not simply the result of more children with parents who worked part-time or non-day shifts. The rates of father care also increased among children in families where parents were working either at full-time or day-time jobs.

Table 2. Percent of Preschoolers Cared for by Fathers by Parents' Work Schedule, 1988 and 1991

	Mother's work schedule		Father's work schedule	
Parents' Work Schedule	**1991**	**1988**	**1991**	**1988**
Percent of children in father care:	22.9	17.9	22.9	17.9
Parent works full-time	17.0	10.6	20.3	16.4
Day shift	12.1	6.8	17.3	14.1
Non-day shift	32.1	23.0	29.1	23.3
Parent works part-time	31.1	30.3	29.6	23.8
Day shift	17.6	19.0	(B)	(B)
Non-day shift	38.3	37.3	31.5	21.9
Parent has not worked in last 4 months	(X)	(X)	55.5	48.7
All parents with day shifts	13.5	9.6	17.3	14.4
All parents with non-day shifts	36.2	31.8	29.7	23.1

(B) Base too small to show derived measures
(X) Not applicable
Note: Limited to children under age 5 of employed women in married-couple families
Schedule refers to principal job held in last 4 months
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation

Juggling Work and Child Care

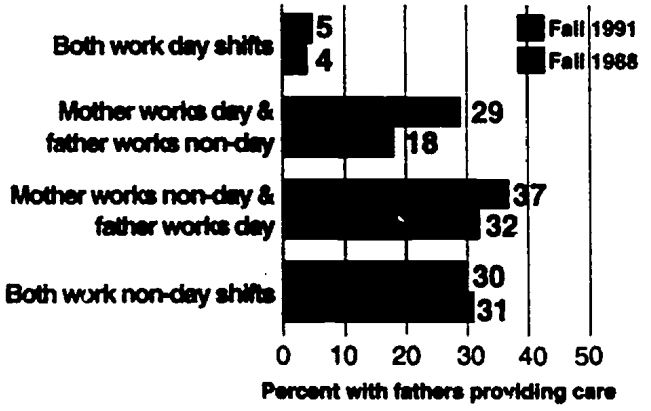
Despite the increase in father-provided child care, fathers are much less likely than mothers to adjust their work schedules to accommodate child care needs. Only 2 percent of preschoolers in 1991 had employed fathers who reported that child care considerations influenced their choice of work schedule for their principal job. Fathers who were the primary child care provider for their children were somewhat more likely, however, to make adjustments. About 6 percent of these fathers said child care concerns influenced their work schedule. Few fathers (1 percent) changed or altered their work schedule for child care reasons if their children were cared for in an organized facility, such as a child care center or preschool.

In contrast, 20 percent of preschoolers had mothers who cited child care reasons for selecting their current work schedule. Even if the father was the primary care provider, the mother worked around the father's schedule. In fact, in 40 percent of the cases where fathers were the primary care provider, mothers said they adjusted their work schedules for child care reasons. As noted above, only 6 percent of the fathers in this situation gave similar answers. Even when child care was provided by a child care center, 15 percent of the children cared for in centers had mothers who said that their work hours were influenced by child care considerations.

These numbers probably underestimate the overall influence of child care arrangements on choosing work schedules. Mothers typically perform the daily acrobatics needed to balance work and family life. In some work settings, workers can select among different shifts once hired, but most jobs have required hours. About two-thirds of all mothers said their current work shift was inflexible—that it was a requirement of the job. How well work schedules match child care needs may be one of the main considerations that employed mothers ponder in accepting a job.

In cases where unemployment or reduced work schedules make father-provided care possible or necessary, the benefits of having father serve as the child's care provider while mother works may need to be weighed against the economic and emotional impact experienced by the family. The increased parent-child interaction may not be in the child's best interest if the economic circum-

Figure 6. Percent of Preschoolers Cared for by Fathers by Work Shift of Parents, 1988 and 1991



Note: Limited to children under age 5 of employed women in married-couple families.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation

stances have left the family with few alternatives.

The new Family and Medical Leave Act gives parents more child care choices in the few months after a new baby joins the family. The Act, signed by President Clinton in 1993, provides job security for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave after childbirth or adoption if employees choose to stay home to care for their child. This offers either parent the opportunity to provide care during the first few months that a child enters the family without causing economic uncertainty about job security during this usually hectic period in family life.

Which Fathers Will Become Child Care Providers?

For all children under age 15 who live with two parents and whose mothers work outside the home, about 13 percent have their fathers as their primary child care providers. In fact, in 1991, there were more children under age 15 living in married-couple families who had fathers as primary care providers (3.2 million) than the combined number of children in child care centers and nursery schools (2.2 million).

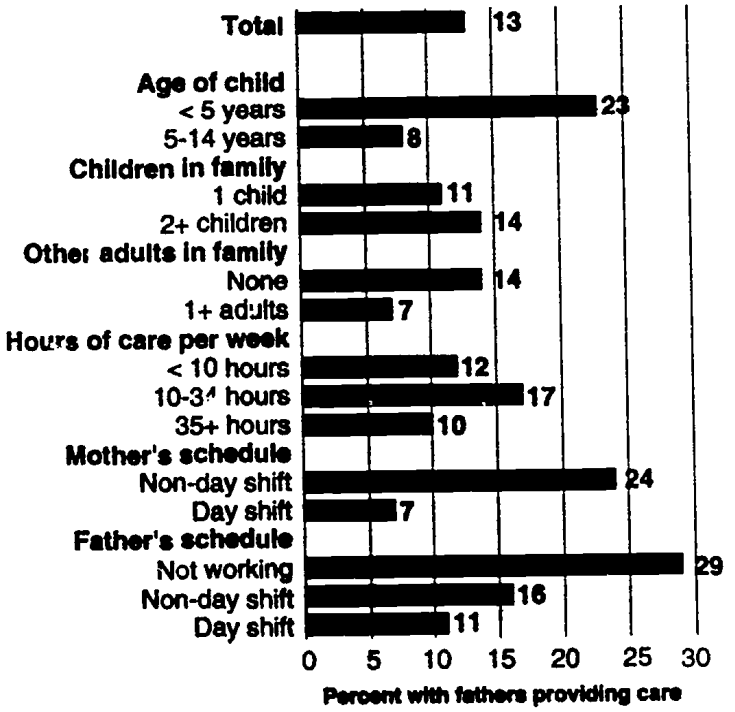
But which fathers are more likely to assume the role of primary child care provider while mothers work? A number of family and economic considerations come into play.

Demographic factors

The age of the child is an important factor. As Figure 7 shows, preschoolers with employed mothers were nearly three times more likely to have their fathers as primary care providers (23 percent) than school-age children (8 percent). Men's involvement in child care activities seems to decline as children grow older. Other studies of time use, examining the father's participation in various household activities, have made this observation as well.[5]

Family size and household composition also appear to play a role in child care choices. Families

Figure 7. Percent of Children Cared for by Fathers by Family Characteristics, 1991



Note: Limited to children under age 15 of employed women in married-couple families.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation

with several children may depend more on the father as care provider to reduce or eliminate potentially high child care costs. Families with two or more children were more likely than those with only one child to have the father serve as principal care provider. Furthermore, fathers were twice as likely to be child care providers when no other adult lived in the household than if another adult was present (14 versus 7 percent, respectively).

Neither race nor ethnicity appeared to be a factor in a father assuming primary child care responsibilities. For white and African-American children in married-couple families, about 13 percent had their father as the principal care provider; for Hispanic children, it was 15 percent. These differences are not statistically significant, however.[6]

Work schedules

Children under age 15 whose mothers worked non-day shifts rather than day shifts were three times more likely to have their fathers provide their care (24 versus 7 percent). This pattern was found for both preschool and school-age children. Children under age 15 were also more likely to have their fathers as their caregivers if the father worked non-day rather than day shifts (16 versus 11 percent, respectively).

Fathers who were out of work were the most likely candidates to provide child care. Three of every 10 children whose fathers were jobless for four consecutive months in 1991 had their fathers as their primary care providers. Fifty-six percent of preschoolers with jobless fathers were cared for by their fathers; the corresponding rate for children between ages 5 and 14 was 18 percent.[7]

Hours of care

In 1991, fathers were most often child care providers when children needed between 10 and 34 hours of care per week (2 to 7 hours per day). Fathers may be less likely to provide child care above this range because the time required may create too many conflicts with their existing work schedule. On the other hand, it is not apparent why fathers are less likely to provide fewer than 10 hours of care each week. Perhaps alternative providers for very short periods of time are readily available and not too costly. Nonetheless, the middle range of hourly child care needs may characterize situations where outside providers are more difficult to find and, if found, may be costly.

Single Mothers

Single mothers, whether divorced, separated, widowed, or never married, face a different set of problems securing child care than do married-couple families. The child's father typically is not present on a day-to-day basis to help with child care duties. Furthermore, family finances for a single mother are generally more limited, thereby reducing child care options.

Although an increasing number of absent fathers are maintaining contact with their children, only 2 percent were primary child care providers for their children under age 15 in 1991. For preschool children, the share rose to 7 percent.

but this share is far lower than the 23 percent of married fathers who care for their preschoolers.

Children of never-married women are more likely to have fathers as primary child care providers than are children of divorced or separated women. Several factors could account for this finding. Divorce and separation agreements restricting paternal visits or roles may be responsible for these lower rates of child care participation. Also, divorce or separation may result in geographic moves by either parent that make a father's participation in child care impossible. In addition, divorce or separation usually create strained relationships that may not be conducive to frequent daily contact between former spouses and their children.

Not surprisingly, the factors that influence whether the father is likely to provide child care in a married-couple household—such as number of children in the family, hours of care needed, and mother's work schedule—did not influence whether fathers provided care for children of unmarried women. Factors that affect decisions about family budgets and husband-wife work schedules in a married-couple household become less important once the father is in another household. The constraints faced in the father's new living arrangement, especially if he is remarried and living with stepchildren, are likely to determine his availability and willingness to perform child care for his former family.

Not only are single mothers less likely than married women to receive help with child care responsibilities from the child's father, the likelihood of fathers becoming primary child care providers is also affected by race and ethnicity. African-American men are less likely than those of other race or ethnic groups to serve as primary child care providers for their children from previous unions. Less than one percent of black children under age 15 in single-parent homes were cared for by their father while their mother worked. The corresponding rates for white and Hispanic children were slightly higher—3 and 4 percent, respectively. The difference is considerably greater, however, for preschool children. Only 2 percent of black preschoolers in single-parent homes were cared for by their father while their mother worked, compared with 9 percent of white children and 10 percent of Hispanic children.

This finding is somewhat surprising since recent studies have shown that African-American fathers absent from the household are more likely to maintain weekly contacts with their ex-partners and children than are whites.[7] There is no information in the SIPP data concerning the employment status and work schedules of fathers living away from their children nor even the proximity of these fathers to their children so it is impossible to analyze the reasons for these differences. However, other studies provide some clues.

First, studies indicate that absent fathers who are unemployed are less likely to continue contacts with children, especially with children of unmarried teenage mothers.[8] Without accounting for

Children of never-married women are more likely to have fathers as primary child care providers than are children of divorced or separated women.

the father's employment status, the SIPP data may be reflecting the higher unemployment rates of African-American men rather than any real differences by race in the likelihood that African-American men will become child care providers.

Table 3. Projected Growth In Jobs, 1990-2005

Sector	Growth in jobs 1990-2005		Workers 1991	
	Number*	Percent Change	Percent Female	Percent Part-time or Non-day
Services	11,470	42	64	41
Wholesale/retail sales	6,126	24	48	49
Government	3,193	17	55	29
Finance and related industries	1,390	21	61	20
Construction	923	18	9	13
Transportation and utilities	863	15	31	31
Manufacturing	-597	-3	33	24
TOTAL[1]	23,328	20	47	34

* Numbers in thousands
[1] Includes other industries not shown
Source: Max L. Carey and James C. Franklin, "Industry Output and Job Growth Continues Strong into Next Century," *Monthly Labor Review* (November 1991) and May 1991 Current Population Survey

Second, fertility studies have traditionally shown that whites are more likely than blacks to marry after an out-of-wedlock birth.[10] In these instances, child care among unmarried white parents may be more frequent than among African Americans if a future marriage is being planned. This may be especially true in the cases where an unmarried couple is living together prior to their marriage.[11]

One-Time Change or Future Trend?

Is the increase in paternal child care the beginning of a new trend towards greater participation by fathers in traditional household activities, such as child care, or simply a reaction to an economic downturn? Several factors suggest that men will continue to increase their role as child care providers.

First, changes in the economy suggest a greater demand for men to assume child care responsibilities. The most rapidly growing segment of the U.S. economy is the services sector. Projections by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that about one half of the 23 million wage and salary jobs expected to be created between 1990 and 2005 will be in the services sector (see Table 3).

Almost two-thirds of services sector jobs in 1991 were held by women and just over 40 percent were part-time or non-day positions. These factors—rapid growth of traditionally female-dominated jobs and a high proportion of part-time and non-day work—create the most likely settings for fathers to serve as child care providers.

Second, no matter how the economy grows in the future, increases in child care costs and in the proportion of women returning to work after childbirth will continue to exert pressure on fathers to provide child care, if the supply of affordable alternative arrangements does not expand. After pausing at the 50 percent level between 1986 and 1988, the proportion of women who had infants and were in the labor force rose to 54 percent by 1992.[12] Whether the pro-

portion of women in the labor force who have very young children will grow much higher is, of course, unknown. Several European countries, however, report labor force participation rates for women with children under age 3 above those of the United States.[13] It is possible, therefore that U.S. rates may continue to climb.

Third, families may be returning more to child care services provided by relatives rather than nonrelatives, especially for preschool-age children. A particularly sharp drop in the proportion of families using family child care providers—that is, nonrelatives who care for children in their own homes—occurred between 1988 and 1991 (see Table A-1, page 17). Whereas family child care providers looked after 24 percent of all preschool children in 1988, their share dropped to 18 percent in 1991. The reasons for this decline are not known. The availability or cost of child care services may be a contributing factor. Heightened awareness of child abuse may also have prompted parents to limit their use of providers outside of family circles. Whatever the reasons, the proportion of fathers who served as primary care providers was on the rise during the same time that use of nonrelative care providers was declining.

Finally, recent news stories suggest that increasing numbers of fathers want to care for their children for personal, emotional, and financial reasons.[14] These fathers emphasized, however, that the decision to become their child's primary child care provider was still regarded as rare by many men and outside the mainstream of corporate culture.

Whether the recently observed changes in arrangements signal a permanent trend is difficult to ascertain. We do know, however, that paternal child care increased since 1988 for families with and without fathers present in the child's home, and for both fathers and mothers who were full-time or day-shift workers. So while changes in the economy may have moved families into situations more amenable to father-provided child care, increased participation by the father in this crucial family activity also occurred in those employment situations where father care was traditionally least expected. However, the largest increases in father care were noted when husbands and wives worked different time shifts, indicating that future increases in father care may only be realized when both parents mutually adjust their work schedules to meet child care needs.

Will the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 further increase the likelihood of fathers acting as caregivers? It will give more fathers the option of staying home a few months to provide child care. But up until now, all data point to mothers—not fathers—making most of the daily adjustments to accommodate child care activities. Perhaps this new law will allow more fathers to choose to provide child care—even for a few months. But business practices will also need to change to allow workers the flexibility that parents need to share a more equitable distribution of child care responsibilities between partners.

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2. The principal data source for the child care information in this report consists of child care surveys conducted by the Census Bureau in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The data shown are for the three youngest children under age 15 of employed mothers. The interviews were conducted over a four month period and refer to the arrangements used between September and December, 1991 (fall 1991). There were 2,770 employed women in the sample reporting on child care characteristics for 4,631 children. The data have been weighted to represent national-level estimates.
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10. Amara Bachu, "Fertility of American Women: June 1990." *Current Population Reports*, P-20, no. 454 (October 1991).
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13. Constance Sorrentino, "The Changing Family in International Perspective," *Monthly Labor Review* 113, no. 3 (March 1990).
14. See Elizabeth Mehren, "On the Daddy Track," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 June 1993, pp. B10-11. Also, Nancy R. Gibbs, "Bringing Up Father," *Time*, 28 June 1993, pp. 53-61.

Table A-1. Primary Child Care Arrangement Used by Working Mothers for Preschoolers (Under Age 5), 1977-1991

Type of Arrangement	Fall 1991	Fall 1990	Fall 1988	Fall 1987	Fall 1986	Winter 1985	June 1977
ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN							
Number of children*	9,854	9,629	9,483	9,124	8,849	8,168	4,370
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	35.7	29.7	28.2	29.9	28.7	31.0	33.9
By father	20.0	16.5	15.1	15.3	14.5	15.7	14.4
By grandparent	7.2	5.2	5.7	5.1	5.2	5.7	NA
By other relative	3.2	2.9	2.2	3.3	3.4	3.7	12.6[3]
By nonrelative	5.4	5.0	5.3	6.2	5.5	5.9	7.0
Care in another home	31.0	35.1	36.8	35.6	40.7	37.0	40.7
By grandparent	8.6	9.1	8.2	8.7	10.2	10.2	NA
By other relative	4.5	5.9	5.0	4.6	6.5	4.5	18.3[3]
By nonrelative	17.9	20.1	23.6	22.3	24.0	22.3	22.4
Organized child care facilities	23.0	27.5	25.8	24.4	22.4	23.1	13.0
Child/group care center	15.8	20.6	16.6	16.1	14.9	14.0	NA
Nursery school/preschool	7.3	6.9	9.2	8.3	7.5	9.1	NA
Child cares for self	-	0.1	0.1	0.3	-	-	0.4
Mother cares for child at work[1]	8.7	6.4	7.6	8.9	7.4	8.1	11.4
Other arrangements[2]	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.6
MARRIED COUPLES WITH CHILDREN							
Number of children*	8,048	7,711	7,846	7,474	7,029	6,637	3,618
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	36.6	29.7	28.2	30.0	29.7	31.3	34.4
By father	22.9	19.8	17.9	18.2	17.9	18.8	17.1
By grandparent	5.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.3	NA
By other relative	2.5	2.3	1.1	2.2	2.7	2.6	10.1[3]
By nonrelative	5.5	4.0	5.5	6.0	5.6	6.5	7.2
Care in another home	29.5	34.3	36.2	35.4	41.2	36.5	40.1
By grandparent	8.1	9.3	8.2	8.5	10.6	10.6	NA
By other relative	4.2	5.3	4.3	4.7	6.1	4.1	17.6[3]
By nonrelative	17.1	19.7	23.7	22.2	24.4	21.8	22.6
Organized child care facilities	22.7	26.8	25.4	23.4	20.3	22.3	11.6
Child/group care center	15.6	20.1	16.1	15.4	12.8	12.7	NA
Nursery school/preschool	7.1	6.7	9.4	8.0	7.5	9.6	NA
Child cares for self	-	0.1	0.1	0.1	-	-	0.3
Mother cares for child at work[1]	9.8	7.8	8.7	10.1	8.3	9.2	12.9
Other arrangements[2]	1.4	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.6

Continued on page 18

Table A-1, continued.
Care Arrangement for Preschoolers

Type of Arrangement	Fall 1991	Fall 1990	Fall 1988	Fall 1987	Fall 1986	Winter 1985	June 1977
SINGLE MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN							
Number of children*	1,806	1,917	1,637	1,650	1,820	1,531	753
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	31.7	29.5	28.3	29.2	25.1	30.0	31.3
By father	7.0	3.2	1.5	2.3	1.4	2.2	0.8
By grandparent	14.1	11.5	15.6	11.3	11.7	16.2	NA
By other relative	6.0	5.6	7.1	8.1	6.5	8.6	24.8[3]
By nonrelative	4.5	9.3	4.0	7.6	5.5	2.9	5.7
Care in another home	37.6	38.2	39.5	36.5	39.0	39.1	43.4
By grandparent	10.7	8.5	8.3	9.5	8.6	8.3	NA
By other relative	5.6	8.2	8.3	4.7	8.0	6.4	21.6[3]
By nonrelative	21.3	27.8	22.8	22.3	22.4	24.4	21.8
Organized child care facilities	24.5	30.4	27.8	28.3	30.2	26.7	19.1
Child/group care center	16.3	22.9	19.2	18.9	23.0	19.6	NA
Nursery school/preschool	8.1	7.5	8.6	9.4	7.2	7.1	NA
Child cares for self	-	-	-	1.1	-	-	0.7
Mother cares for child at work[1]	3.7	0.7	2.4	3.4	3.8	3.5	4.4
Other arrangements[2]	2.5	1.3	2.1	1.4	1.9	0.6	0.9

* Numbers in thousands
NA Not available
- Represents zero or rounds to zero
Note. Data for June 1977 are only for the two youngest children under age 5. All other data are for the three youngest children under age 5
[1] Includes mothers working at home or away from home
[2] Includes children in kindergarten/grade school and other school-based activities
[3] Data for 1977 include grandparents in other relative category
Percentages may not add to total because of rounding
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, June 1977 Current Population Survey and 1985-1991 Surveys of Income and Program Participation

Table A-2. Primary Child Care Arrangement Used by Working Mothers for School-age Children (Ages 5-14), 1985-1991

Type of Arrangement	Fall 1991	Fall 1990	Fall 1988	Fall 1987	Fall 1986	Winter 1985
ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN						
Number of children*	21,220	21,261	20,804	19,718	19,692	18,287
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	10.7	11.7	11.9	13.5	13.2	11.8
By father	6.6	7.3	7.1	6.7	7.2	6.6
By grandparent	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.5	1.2	1.3
By other relative	1.9	2.3	2.2	4.0	3.6	2.7
By nonrelative	0.9	0.8	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.1
Care in another home	3.6	3.1	4.0	5.4	5.5	4.3
By grandparent	1.2	1.0	1.4	1.9	1.7	1.7
By other relative	1.0	0.7	0.7	1.1	1.1	0.5
By nonrelative	1.4	1.4	1.9	2.3	2.7	2.1
Organized child care facilities	1.9	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.7	2.8
Child/group care center	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
Nursery school/preschool	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.6	1.0	1.2
Kindergarten/grade school	79.2	78.6	77.2	71.1	70.6	75.2
Child cares for self	2.7	2.6	2.3	4.1	4.8	2.7
Mother cares for child at work '	2.0	1.8	2.1	3.6	3.2	3.2
MARRIED COUPLES WITH CHILDREN						
Number of children*	16,625	16,302	16,022	14,910	15,176	14,202
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	11.2	12.6	12.6	14.0	14.1	12.8
By father	8.4	9.4	9.1	8.7	9.1	8.4
By grandparent	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.2
By other relative	1.4	1.7	1.7	3.1	3.0	2.0
By nonrelative	0.5	0.4	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1
Care in another home	2.5	1.9	3.1	4.4	4.1	3.6
By grandparent	0.9	0.6	1.1	1.4	1.1	1.3
By other relative	0.6	0.3	0.3	1.1	0.6	0.4
By nonrelative	1.0	1.1	1.7	1.9	2.3	1.9
Organized child care facilities	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.8
Child/group care center	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.6
Nursery school/preschool	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.6	1.0	1.2
Kindergarten/grade school	79.8	79.0	77.5	71.9	72.3	75.1
Child cares for self	2.0	2.3	1.9	3.3	3.6	2.3
Mother cares for child at work '	2.5	1.9	2.6	4.0	3.3	3.4

Continued on page 20

Table A-2, continued.
Care Arrangement for School-age Children

Type of Arrangement	Fall 1991	Fall 1990	Fall 1988	Fall 1987	Fall 1986	Winter 1985
SINGLE MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN						
Number of children*	4,595	4,959	4,781	4,808	4,516	4,085
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	8.6	8.9	9.8	12.2	10.5	8.5
By father	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.4
By grandparent	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.8	2.2	1.8
By other relative	3.5	4.4	4.0	6.8	5.5	5.1
By nonrelative	2.4	2.0	3.1	2.0	2.3	1.2
Care in another home	7.4	6.9	6.9	8.5	10.2	6.7
By grandparent	2.1	2.3	2.3	3.8	3.7	3.1
By other relative	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.4	2.5	1.0
By nonrelative	3.0	2.5	2.7	3.3	3.9	2.6
Organized child care facilities	1.7	2.4	3.5	2.1	3.0	3.1
Child/group care center	1.2	2.0	2.7	1.6	2.0	1.7
Nursery school/preschool	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.5	1.0	1.4
Kindergarten/grade school	77.2	77.1	76.0	68.5	65.2	75.5
Child cares for self	5.1	3.5	3.5	6.4	8.5	3.8
Mother cares for child at work [1]	-	1.2	0.4	2.2	2.7	2.3

* Numbers in thousands
- Represents zero or rounds to zero
[1] Includes mothers working at home or away from home
Percentages may not add to total because of rounding
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985-1991 Surveys of Income and Program Participation

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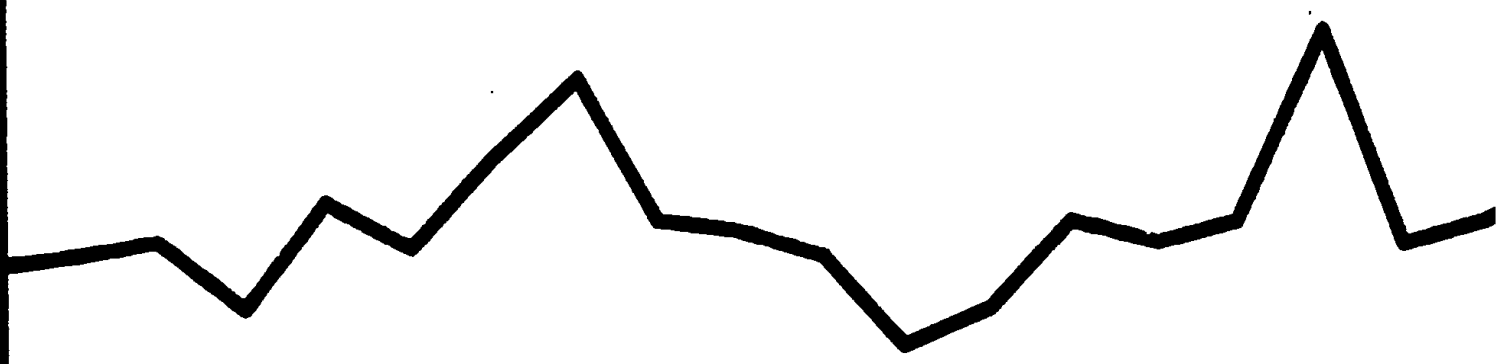

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