

Choosing
Child Care

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Choosing child care

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CHILD CARE: MANY OPTIONS,
MANY CHANGING PATTERNS

Mary P. Rowe, Ph.D.

M.I.T.

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CHILD CARE: MANY OPTIONS,
MANY CHANGING PATTERNS

or

FATHERS, MOTHERS AND CHILDREN:
HOW WILL WE TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER?

"We're going to get married while we both finish up in engineering", said Roger, bringing in Anne, his fiancée. "We want to marry, and probably to have one or two children and we want to know how to do it. Also we want to know what is best for the children.....how should we take care of them?" Most people Roger and Anne's age are asking these questions. They are finding many different answers. Answers for parents depend on people's values, on people's jobs, on resources and friends and family available. And what is best for the children is also not easy to answer. Above the level of abuse, there appear to be many acceptable answers as to what is best for children.

How to do it, with jobs and children, used to be a pretty straightforward business. Most people followed one similar pattern; a few people varied it a little; a few people varied it a lot. This meant that in most husband-wife families---perhaps 80% of them--there were two or three or four or more children, with the father as the only bread winner, except for pin money brought in by the mother for work done at home. Other less frequent variations included the mother in part-time or full-time work outside the home.

In the 1980's we believe there will be many different, basic child care patterns built around changes in labor force patterns and fertility. This article discusses some of the changes in society which mean new child care

patterns are developing. Then there is a description of the many different child care arrangements in the United States today. This is followed by a brief discussion of the pros and cons of different arrangements.

To begin with, the full-time labor force participation rate for men may be down to about 70% by 1980, for a basic 30-35 hour week. This means that only about 70% of all men aged 16-65 will be in paid, full-time work or looking for work, at any given time. Others will be in training, on leave, early-retired, out-of-work or working as fathers and househusbands.

The part-time and full-time labor force participation rate for women will probably be at least 70%; thus paid-work patterns for most women will be similar to those of most men, for most of their lives. This will be especially true for the probable tenth of all women who will never marry and the ten to twenty percent who we expect will have no biological children. We expect that perhaps another 50% of all women will have only one or two children; they too are likely to lead working lives much like those of their men. These groups taken together will establish a mode of paid work for all women very different than the traditional mode of the 1950's.

Already the modal family has changed enormously. In place of the traditional, male-as-sole-breadwinner family, (which now accounts for only a third of two-parent families in the U.S.), half of all husband-wife families now have both spouses in the paid labor force. In addition to these extraordinary changes in labor force participation we will probably see a

further great change in family economics. From the 30% of family incomes brought in by U.S. wives in 1975, we will probably see 40% brought in by the women of the 1980's. And probably at least a fifth of all wives will earn as much or more than their husbands.

Changes in marriage patterns, toward divorce and unusual family forms, are expected to continue into the 1980's, although families as such seem here to stay (Bane, 1977.) I estimate that in the 1980's at least half of all children will spend at least two years of their childhood in a "non-traditional" family. Most of these will be living during such periods with single parents. At any given time probably 75-80% of all children 0-16 will be living with two parents or with parents and step-parents. However, probably more than half will have lived in a family different from the traditional nuclear type, for a significant period of their early lives.

All these changes may be expected to occur in the context of very swiftly changing values about men and women. We expect that in the 1980's it will be widely accepted that women are equally, or nearly equally, financially responsible for their families. These changes will be fostered and acknowledged by equal rights laws. Both men and women will become step-parents in very large numbers. Possibly as many as half of all children will know a temporary or permanent step-parent at some point during their childhoods; possibly a third of all parenting adults will live with a step-child at some point. We cannot know exactly what the mores will be about financial responsibility but it seems likely that divorce and remarriage of custodial mothers will result in a further acceptance of the idea of financial responsibility

of all women those in two-parent as well as one-parent families.

By the same token, our values about men and homemaking and child care seem to be changing rapidly in some segments of the population¹. A 1976 Gallup poll reports that men who believe in relatively egalitarian marriage are far more likely to report their marriages as "Very Happy." And a fair amount of evidence, including this same poll, indicates a considerable shift for about half of American men, toward increasing egalitarianism.

In the 1980's more men will become single parent fathers, through death, divorce and adoption. (The proportion of single parent males has already increased to about a tenth of all single parents.) Family patterns also change due to the sharp increase in the number of wives who are major or chief breadwinners. All these facts will mean that the social and legal rights and expectations of men with regard to child care may be expected to continue to expand during the 1980's. Thus changes in labor force participation, in fertility, marriage, divorce, and sex-role attitudes have combined to permit very wide ranges of child care patterns and customs.

Child-Care Arrangements in the Early 1970's

Recent nation-wide surveys of child care arrangements illuminate the very wide variety of child care patterns now existing. By and large, they vary by age of child, by type of parental employment, by family income, number of children, and arrangements available.

¹. See for example, Fein (1976), Levine (1976), Pleck (forthcoming), Rowe (1976), and the new panel data from the Institute for Survey Research at Michigan.

To begin with an examination of the traditional norm, (that mothers are the chief or only child carers), we find that most mothers are basically responsible for the children, although few are completely alone in this endeavor. Only about 3% of all households have a child under 10 and use no form of care besides the mother in her own home. (Unco, 1976,²) And only 7% have a child or children aged 10-13, and report no child care at all. Nearly nine-tenths of all households with children under 14 do use some kind of care, once in a while, other than the mother in her own home.

However many use very little care other than the mother. About a third of all parents report using care very briefly, for up to an hour per week. Another 30% use care 1-9 hours per week. Brief arrangements usually involve the spouse (52%), an older sibling (30%), relatives in their own or the child's home (33%, 27%). Others include baby sitters (26%) and the child alone at home (12%).

Thus in about 75% of all homes with 0-13 year olds the mother is the principal and essentially the only care taker. This is clearly the dominant mode of American child care, and is mitigated in a major way only by hours children are in school, from age 5 or 6, and by brief babysitting hours totalling fewer than ten hours per week. Of the remainder, 10% of all children are in care 10-19 hours per week, 4% for 20-29 hours per week, 2% for 30-39 hours, 6% for 40-49 hours, 3% for more than 50 hours.

². Unless otherwise specified, detailed data in this article are from the Unco study.

There are two major, recent sources of data on the kinds of child care used for pre-adolescent children in the States. The Unco study examined all households using at least ten hours of care per week and concluded that only a third of the mothers in these households were in paid jobs. (Others may have been in school or training). The major types of care used by the households in this study were a relative in the child's home or another home (20% and 25%) and care by a non-relative in the child's home or another home (16% and 20%), for a total of 81% of all care more than ten hours per week. Another major study also looked at care over ten hours per week for 0-12 years-olds whose mothers were in paid work. Here again relatives including siblings accounted for 32% of all care, non-relatives in the child's home or another home for 37% of all care, for a total of 70% (Duncan and Hill, 1975). The Unco study, and comparison of the two studies, indicate that relatives are somewhat more likely to be child carers for children whose mothers are not in paid employment. But in any case, family is plainly still very important in American child care arrangements.

Reading both of these studies and other available data (see for instance Levine, 1976) suggests that in about 10-20% of all households where both parents are employed, that parents share much of the child care. Two-parent homes with a primary househusband are quite rare-- but homes where men account for substantial child care are now a distinct mode.

Day care appears to be somewhat less prevalent than many observers might hope or fear. Recent studies find all formal child care arrangements, taken together, to comprise not more than 8 or 10% of all arrangements, and not more than 20% of all major arrangements (more than ten hours per week). Day care (including nursery school, Headstart, before and after school programs, as well as programs called day care), is a major source of child care only for pre-school children with mothers in paid employment, in areas where such care is available.

How To Choose a Child Care Arrangement

How should a young couple choose? One is tempted to answer: "Without much concern." Of course parents should choose child arrangements with thoughtful care, finding as many possibilities as they can, and then learning all the details about each possibility. But no one should feel bound to seek the "one right method," or to feel that any given careful decision needs to be permanent.

To begin with, most people change arrangements several times. Many parents arrange in-family care or care by relatives for infants. For children between one and two, many parents begin to use a different kind of care, often because the major caretaker has gone back into paid employment. As the child becomes a pre-schooler, parents may switch again, often seeking some hours in a formal arrangement, especially if the mother is in paid work. Counting all kinds of care in addition to the mother in her own home, 36% of all parents use one kind of child care, 30% two kinds, 34% three or more different kinds of arrangements, (at any one time), (Unco, 1976).

Cost and distance from home are major considerations. About two-thirds of all households pay no cash for child care, but many arrangements are reimbursed in kind; only about a tenth of all arrangements are considered "free". And probably half of all substantial arrangements (more than ten hours) are not cash-paid. Despite the fact that several studies find cost a "secondary" consideration, (in parents' reported feelings in choosing a care arrangement,) it is clear that actual behavior in choosing child care depends very much on the price of care. With respect to distance from home, about 80% of all child care occurs within ten minutes of home; fewer than 5% of all parents travel as much as 30 minutes from home for a child care arrangement. Thus most parents will consider time, money, and distance, with great care.

Another important problem has to do with the reliability of child care arrangements. Parents in paid employment place a high premium on arrangements which do not break down. The Michigan study indicates that in practice, arrangements made by employed parents break down only very rarely. In-family care and relatives appear to be the most reliable kinds of care, with "child takes care of self" and babysitters found to be less reliable. (Dickinson, 1975) This may be one reason why care in home and with relatives is nearly universally the most satisfactory. (Unco, 1976). However it is important also to note that there is a clear and separate mode of parents who prefer child care centers (and their variations) even though sick children often cannot go to them. This is presumably because of the educational and social advantages many parents find in these formal programs.

How important is the availability of care? Studies differ on this subject. Some investigators believe that parents who want and need paid work will find some kind of child care, willy-nilly. These authorities believe that the "availability" of child care options has no real effect on parental labor force participation. On the other hand, there is some evidence to indicate that most parents who believe that they could find a free arrangement, a relative, or that they could themselves split child care, are already doing so and that more parents would use more child care if it were available. (Dickinson, 1975). The Unco study also estimated that perhaps a fourth of all users would change arrangements if they easily could.

Effects on Children and Parents of Child Care Arrangements

There are no easy answers as to which child care arrangement is "best" for children. This is partly because it is very difficult to measure any kind of different effects from different, responsible arrangements. Above the level of child abuse, it is almost impossible to find lasting differences among children in different arrangements. This is true for a variety of methodological reasons and because children are extraordinarily adaptable. (Rowe, 1976) Such evidence as exists suggests that children appear to thrive best when their parents are satisfied with their work lives and child care arrangements, and when their care taker is stable and responsive. (Howell, 1973). Obviously it is enormously important that parents be truly well-informed about a variety of arrangements, in order to choose wisely. It is also important that parents continually monitor child care arrangements in order to prevent abuse, and ensure responsiveness to the child's needs.

Which child care arrangement is best for parents depends on a wide variety of factors. We know that there are many parents who stagger their working hours completely, in order to care for their children. These parents widely report themselves very dissatisfied with their arrangements, often feeling very lonely indeed, with little waking or sleeping time to share with their spouses. On the other hand, some "split arrangement" parents, who ^{also} use an additional child care arrangement and see each other regularly, are among the happiest parents. Many parents who are essentially in the traditional mode, with the mother as sole caretaker, report themselves much happier about their children's welfare. Others would prefer more relief, or more time in paid employment.

The Unco study reported that about half of all parents who would like to change their child care arrangements, would prefer a formal arrangement such as a day care center. Many of those with children under two however, would prefer in-home care, preferably with relatives.

What Should Anne and Roger Choose: The Traditional Mode or the Egalitarian Mode?

The traditional mode and its variations are by now rather well understood. His career comes first in the constellation of both spouses' use of time. He will try to maximize his opportunities, promotions, salary in paid work. Both husband and wife are free to concentrate on his schedule and needs; there need be no conflict between her career and his, although there may be some conflict between the two spouses over time spent with the family.

If Roger and Anne choose this model, Roger is likely to allocate his time in whatever way will best advance his career. His time in the home and with children will depend on his work, not on Anne's work or how many children they have. Anne may stay home for a year or two with the children or work part-time when they are very small. She will do nearly all the homemaking. She will use child care while she is at her paid job and will, all in all, work 7-10 hours more per week than Roger, counting all work activities. She will also get less sleep than he but will probably have a more leisurely life during some of her hours at home. How she will spend her day will depend mainly on Roger's day and the children. Her career will be considered secondary until the last child is well on his or her way.

But these two may well consider the truly egalitarian mode, since a great many U. S. students assert that they wish to do so. Let us imagine that Roger and Anne decide this way. If each of them can find half or three-quarter time paid work while the children are small the family will receive one, or one and a half salaries for these years. Suppose each parent works thirty hours a week in a paid job. Suppose further that they use child care twenty to thirty hours per week, including evening babysitting, and that otherwise they split child care responsibilities by some job-staggering. They will each get to know the children and the skills of homemaking, they will have a chance to spend some time alone together, and perhaps even some time at church activities or volunteer work.

These spouses will probably have a much keener sense of each other's lives. The typical "learned helplessness" of each sex toward the other's role may never happen to Roger and Anne. As they share responsibilities they may feel much less taken for granted and less lonely than many fathers and mothers. One can imagine Anne being very supportive of Roger's need to relax after the office, and that Roger will never drop laundry on the floor.

Their family financial security will grow, along with family incomes, since lifetime earnings and the ability to find and keep a job depend much more on continuous years in the labor force than on hours per week. Promotions will probably come several later for Roger and Anne, than for full-time workers. However, each will expect much higher life time earnings than if he or she drops out for very long, for family responsibilities. Thus their expected later promotions permit much higher (and more secure) family earnings. We would expect that the quality of life for these two may be rather good as they each have several arenas for friends, status, productivity, and self image. Both spouses will have work areas, at home and in volunteer work, where there is considerable autonomy over one's work. Anne will get more sleep than if she lived in a traditional life; Roger will gain more options for self-expression and perhaps a respite from the competition at work.

If either is left alone, through death or divorce, he or she is more likely to survive in both paid work and family life. (Men who equally care for their children have, in practice, more rights with respect to custody and visitation).

One can imagine that when Roger and Anne retire from child raising and paid work they will be much more comfortable, under circumstances where they both have a wider range of skills and interests. Their mid-life crises may also be less severe, with a wider range of options offered by two sets of skills and two incomes in the family!

Many couples may choose to share family responsibilities this way, so completely that neither spouse ever drops out of school or job for family reasons. But other couples may choose to have one or the other spouse a full-time homemaker for a period of time and to alternate who is staying home. And many couples may need to work full-time in paid employment, using child care then 30-45 hours per week, at least until the youngest child is in school. The important question is the decision, early on, to share homemaking, financial responsibility and child care. Many couples seem to be making the new model work very well.

Summary

What then would we tell Roger and Anne, as they consider two jobs and the modal one or two children? We would suggest a flexible, careful, continuous examination of child care options, with probable plans for several different arrangements, at one time and over time. Most probably they will consider a variant on the theme of Anne as chief caretaker, but not necessarily. If their marriage is egalitarian, they will find more and more of the law, and more and more young couples agreeing with their values, and their chances of

a very happy marriage may be greater. If they decide for the use of child care arrangements, the number of hours they use child care will probably depend on how Anne spends her time. The type of arrangement will vary with age of child, price, distance from home, and the number of children they have. The effects of their child care arrangements, if the arrangements are stable, responsible and carefully chosen, will probably depend chiefly on the parents' values and feelings.

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MARY P. ROWE
Special Assistant for Women and Work

MAR 23 1977

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Mary
Write a
short paper
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and the
Rogis pieces

CHOOSING CHILD-CARE: MANY OPTIONS

- Where
- Whether
- What to do?
Post Script
I did -

Mary P. Rowe, Ph. D.

M. I. T.

January, 1977 ?

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CHOOSING CHILD CARE: MANY OPTIONS

In my office

"We're going to get married while we both finish up in engineering", said Roger, bringing in Anne, his fiancée. "We want to marry, and probably to have one or two children and we want to know how to combine careers and parenthood. Also we want to know what is best for the children. . . . how should we take care of them?" Most people Roger and Anne's age are asking these questions. They are finding many different answers. Answers for parents can be many and various, for they depend on people's values, on people's jobs, on resources and friends and relatives available. And "what is best for the children" is also not easy to answer. Above the level of flagrant abuse, there appear to be many acceptable answers as to what is best for children.

Go back & flip this page

How to combine various jobs with having children, used to be a pretty straightforward issue for most couples. The tendency was to follow one fairly standard pattern; a few people varied it a little; fewer varied it a lot. This meant that in most husband-wife families---perhaps 80% of them--there were two or three or four or more children, with the father as the only bread winner, except for pin money brought in by the mother for work done^{at} home. Other less frequent variations included the mother in part-time or full-time work outside the home.

In the 1980's in the United States, all indications are that there will be many different, basic child care patterns built around changes now manifest in labor force patterns and fertility. This article discusses some of the changes

in society which mean new child care patterns are developing. Then there is a description of the many different child care arrangements in existence today, (though these are still far from uniformly available as options.) This is followed by a brief discussion of the pros and cons of various arrangements and how to choose among them. *For the world is changing*

To begin with, the full-time labor force participation rate for men has been declining. It may be down to about 70% by 1980, for a basic 30-35 hour week. This means that only 70% of all men aged 16-65 will be in paid, full-time work or looking for work, at any given time. Others will be in training, on leave, early-retired, out-of-work, or working as fathers and househusbands.

On the other side of the coin, the labor force participation rate for women has been increasing. It will probably be at least 70% by the 1980's. Thus paid-work patterns for most women will be increasingly similar to those of most men, for most of their lives. This will be especially true for the probable tenth of all women who will never marry and the ten to twenty percent who we expect will have no biological children. We expect that perhaps another 50% of all women will have only one or two children; they too are likely to lead working lives much more like those of their men than has been true in the past. These groups taken together will establish a mode of paid work for all women very different than the traditional mode of the 1950's.

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Changes in marriage patterns, toward divorce and unusual family forms, are expected to continue into the 1980's, although families as such seem here to stay (Bane, 1977). I estimate that in the 1980's at least half of all children will spend at least two years of their childhood in a "non-traditional" family. Most of these will be living during such periods with single parents. At any given time, probably 75-80% of all children 0-16 will be living with two parents, or with parents and step-parents. However probably more than half will have lived in a family different from the traditional nuclear type, for a significant period of their early lives.

All these changes may be expected to occur in the context of very swiftly changing values about men and women. We expect that in the 1980's it will be widely accepted that women are equally, or nearly equally, financially responsible for their families. These changes will be fostered and acknowledged by equal rights laws. Both men and women will become step-parents in very large numbers. Possibly as many as half of all children will know a

temporary or permanent step-parent at some point during their childhoods; possibly a third of all parenting adults will live with a step-child at some point. We cannot know exactly what the prevailing practices will be, about the financial responsibility of mothers, but it seems likely that divorce and remarriage of custodial mothers will result in a further acceptance of the idea of equal financial responsibility of all women, including those in two-parent as well as one-parent families.

By the same token, our values about men and homemaking and child care seem to be changing rapidly in some segments of the population.¹ The earlier stereotypical view was that marriages might, for a variety of reasons, have both parents in paid jobs, ^{but} However it was presumed that such marriages would not, on the average, be as happy as where mothers stayed home. Moreover, ^{early research findings suggested that most couples} ~~it was assumed that in most circumstances~~ mothers would ^{ordinarily} remain chiefly responsible for homemaking and child care even if they also held a paid job. There have of course always been many exceptions, but a large number of American men now appear to have been changing their views very rapidly in the 1970's. A 1976 Gallup poll reports that men who believe in relatively egalitarian marriage are now far more likely to report their marriages as "very happy". And a fair amount of evidence, including this same poll, indicates a considerable shift for about half of American men, toward egalitarianism.

In the 1980's more men will become single parent fathers, through death, divorce and adoption. (The proportion of single parent males has already

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increased to about a tenth of all single parents.) Family patterns also change due to the sharp increase in the number of wives who are major or chief breadwinners. All these facts will mean that the social and legal rights and expectations of men with regard to child care may be expected to continue to expand during the 1980's. Thus changes in labor force participation, in fertility, marriage, divorce, and sex-role attitudes have combined to permit very wide ranges of child care patterns and customs.

For You

1. work question - will you work? NO will you be paid for your work? how much?
2. will you have a family?

3. Child-Care Arrangements in the Early 1970's (Most on this)

Recent nation-wide surveys of child care arrangements illuminate the very wide variety of child care patterns now existing. By and large, they vary by age of child, by type of parental employment, by family income, number of children, and arrangements available.

To begin with an examination of the traditional norm, (that mothers are the chief or only child carers), we find that most mothers are basically responsible for the children, although few are completely alone in this endeavor. Only about 3% of all households have a child under 10 and use no form of care besides the mother in her own home, (Unco, 1976,²). And only 7% have a child or children aged 10-13, and report no child care at all. In other words, nearly nine-tenths of all households with children under 14 do use some kind of care, once in a while, other than the mother in her own home.

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However many use very little care other than the mother. About a third of all parents report using care very briefly, for only about an hour per week. Another 30% use care 1-9 hours per week. These brief arrangements usually involve the spouse (52%), an older sibling (30%), relatives in their own or the child's home (33%, 27%). Others include baby sitters (26%) and the child alone at home (12%).

Thus in about 75% of all homes with 0-13 year olds the mother is the principal, and essentially the only care taker. This is clearly the dominant mode of American child care. This dominant form is mitigated in a major way only by hours children are in school, from age 5 or 6, and by the brief babysitting hours, described above, totalling fewer than ten hours per week. Of the remaining quarter of all families with young children, 10% of the children are in care 10-19 hours per week, 4% for 20-29 hours per week, 2% for 30-39 hours, 6% for 40-49 hours, 3% for more than 50 hours. This group constitutes the second major mode of child-rearing.

There are two major, recent sources of data on the kinds of child care used in two-career families for pre-adolescent children in the States. The Unco study examined all households using at least ten hours of care per week and concluded that only a third of the mothers in these households were in paid jobs. (Others may have been in school or training). The major types of care used by the households in this study were a relative in the child's home or (20% and 25%), and care by a non-relative in the child's home or another home another home (16% and 20%), for a total of 81% of all care more than ten hours per week. Another major study also looked at care over ten hours per week for 0-12 year-olds, whose mothers were all in paid work. Here again relatives (including siblings) accounted for 32% of all care-takers, non-relatives in the

child's home or another home for 37% of all care, for a total of 70% (Duncan and Hill, 1975). The Unco study, and comparison of the two studies, indicate that relatives are somewhat more likely to be child carers for children whose mothers are not in paid employment. But in any case, family is plainly still very important in American child care arrangements. And families and neighbors combined account for a very high proportion of all child care hours.

Reading both of these studies and other available data (see for instance Levine, 1976) suggests that in about 10-20% of all households where both parents are employed, that parents share much of the child care. Two-parent homes with a primary househusband are quite rare--under 5%--but homes where men account for substantial child care are now a distinct mode.

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Effects on Children and Parents of Child Care Arrangements

There are no easy answers as to which child care arrangement is "best" for children. This is partly because it is very difficult to measure any kind of different effects ^{attributable to specific} ~~from different~~ responsible arrangements. Above the level of child abuse, it is almost impossible to find lasting differences among children who have experienced different arrangements. This is true for a variety of methodological (measurement) reasons and because most children are very adaptable. (Rowe, 1976) Such evidence as exists suggests that children thrive best when their parents are satisfied with their work lives and child care arrangements, and when the care-taker is stable and responsive. (Howell, 1973). Obviously it is enormously important that parents be truly well-informed about a variety of arrangements, in order to choose wisely. It is also important

that parents continually monitor child care arrangements in order to prevent abuse, and ensure responsiveness to the child's needs. Within any kind of care arrangement, including "ideally" selected ones, there can be abuse. Moreover children and care facilities change, not to mention the parental pattern into which the care arrangement is being fitted.

Which child care arrangement is best for parents depends on a wide variety of factors. We know that there are many parents who stagger their paid working hours completely, in order to care for their children. These parents widely report themselves very dissatisfied with their arrangements, often feeling very lonely indeed, with little waking or sleeping time to share with their spouses. On the other hand, some "split arrangement" parents, who use an additional child care arrangement and see each other regularly, are among the happiest parents. Many parents who are essentially in the traditional mode, with the mother as sole caretaker, report themselves much happier about their children's welfare ^{than they would be in any alternative arrangement.} Many others would prefer more relief, or more time in paid employment. Parents of children with special needs have a particularly serious need of outside support.

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Costs and Benefits of Choosing The Egalitarian Mode

The traditional mode and its variations are by now rather well understood. The husband's career comes first in the constellation of both spouses' use of time, and the husband will try to maximize his opportunities, promotions, and salary in paid work. Both husband and wife concentrate on his schedule and needs; there need be no conflict between her career and his, although there may be some conflict between the two spouses over time spent with the family.

If Roger and Anne choose this model, Roger is likely to allocate his time in whatever way will best advance his career. His time in the home and with children will depend on his work, not on Anne's work or ^{on} how many children they have. If Anne, the wife, chooses paid work at all, it will probably be after she stays home for a year or more with the children. She will do nearly all the homemaking. When she does take up paid work, she will all in all, work 7-10 hours more per week than Roger, counting all paid and unpaid work and commuting. She will also get less sleep than he but will probably have a more leisurely life during some of her hours at home. How she will allocate her time will depend mainly on Roger's day and the children. Her career will be considered secondary, ^{at} least until the last child is well on his or her independent way.

But if a couple like Roger and Anne opt for a more egalitarian mode, as a great many U.S. students assert that they wish to do, they will have another kind of cost-benefit reckoning to do, in terms of risks and potential ^{benefits} lying ahead. If each of them can find half or three-quarter time paid work, while the children are small, the family will receive one, or one and a half salaries for these years.

Suppose each parent works thirty hours a week in a paid job. Suppose further that they use child care twenty to thirty hours per week, including evening babysitting, and that otherwise they split home-making and child care responsibilities by dint of some job-staggering. They will each get to know the children and the skills of homemaking; they will have a chance to spend some time alone together, and perhaps even some time at church activities or volunteer work.

These spouses will probably have a much keener sense of each other's lives. The typical "learned helplessness" of each sex toward the other's role may never develop in Roger and Anne's marriage. As they share responsibilities they may feel much less taken for granted and less lonely than many fathers and mothers. Anne can still be very supportive of Roger's need to relax after the office though she works herself; and Roger can still help out in Anne's areas of domestic responsibility as well as ^{performing} some of his own.

Their family financial security, as well as actual income, will grow more rapidly than if ^{either} one were the ^{sole} family breadwinner, as lifetime earnings and the ability to find and keep a job depend much more on continuous years in the labor force than on hours per week. Promotions will probably come later for Roger and Anne, than for full-time workers. However, each can expect much higher life time earnings than if he or she drops out for very long, for family responsibilities. Thus despite their expected later promotions, egalitarianism permits much higher (and ~~more~~ secure) family earnings. Though the strains of keeping two jobs going, as well as domestic responsibilities,

may restrict their external activities in some ways, we would expect that the quality of life for these two may never the less be good; each will have several arenas for friends, status, productivity, and self image. Both spouses will have work areas, at home and in volunteer work, where there is considerable autonomy over one's work. Anne may get more sleep and more recognition than if she lived a traditional life; Roger will gain more options for self-expression and perhaps a respite from the competition at work.

If either is left alone, through death or divorce, he or she is more likely to survive in both paid work and family life. (Men who equally care for their children have, in practice, more rights with respect to custody and visitation). One can imagine that when Roger and Anne retire, from child raising and paid work, they will be much more comfortable, under circumstances where they both have a wider range of skills and interests. Their mid-life crises may also be less severe, with a wider range of options offered by two sets of skills and two incomes in the family!

Many couples may choose to share family responsibilities this way, so completely that neither spouse ever drops out of school or job for family reasons. But other couples may choose to have one or the other spouse a full-time homemaker for a period of time and to alternate who is staying home. And many couples may need to have both full-time in paid employment, using child care 30-45 hours per week, at least until the youngest child is in school. The important question is the decision, early on, to share homemaking, financial responsibility and child care. Many couples seem to be making the new model work very well.

How To Choose a Child Care Arrangement

Ideally a couple would begin discussing child care as they begin discussing life together. In the opinion of this author, decisions about child care arrangements are the most fundamental decisions a couple will make, in terms of the roles they will occupy in and out of marriage, for the rest of their lives.³ These decisions, especially if the couple has more than one child, are likely to predict how both partners will spend their time for at least 10-15 years.

A couple anticipating a birth will want to take stock of the parents' careers, of their present and anticipated incomes, of all the possible child care alternatives and of their places of residence and work, (in relation to commuting to work and to care arrangements if any).

They should discuss all possible relatives and friends, and visit and discuss all available alternatives, including trading child care hours with friends. Many couples may even consider moving or changing schools or jobs to permit easier care arrangements. The major elements of choice will be time of commuting, price of care, reliability of care, and special elements of care that a given child may need at a specific time. The price of care should carefully be balanced against the life time earning expectations of a spouse that would otherwise stay home.

3. For a further statement of this point of view, see Dinnerstein, (1976) and Rowe, (1977).

Most communities have libraries and community health programs with access to Day Care and Child Development Council⁴ materials on how to choose child care, how to monitor arrangements, how to evaluate or even become a family day care taker, how to begin a play group or child care center, on how to find lists of local child care facilities, including those with particular ethnic or other characteristics. In the United Kingdom one should

Reading and talking with local experts is most important in cases where parents and/or children have special needs.

All young parents should keep two major rules in mind: their children are much likeliest to thrive if the parents are happy about their work and child care decisions, and if the caretakers are stable, responsive and consistent. Innocent

and non-innocent bystanders can nearly always safely be ignored.

Summary

Young couples, such as the hypothetical one described, would do well to undertake a flexible, careful and continuous examination of child care options. They should have available plans for several different arrangements, at any given time and over time. Most probably they will consider a variant on the theme of Anne ^{the mother} as chief caretaker, but not necessarily. If their marriage is egalitarian, they will find more and more of the law, and more and more young couples agreeing with their values, and their chances of a very happy marriage may be

^{is at 1401 K Street NW}
4. The Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.,
Washington, D. C. 20005

greater. If they decide for the use of child care arrangements, the number of hours they use child care will probably depend on how the caretaking parent (s) spend their time. The type of arrangement will vary with age of child, price, distance from home, and the number of children they have. The effects of their child care arrangements, if the arrangements are stable, responsible and carefully chosen, will ~~probably~~ ^{even more} depend ~~chiefly~~ on the parents' values, ~~and feelings~~ *attitudes and behaviour than on the specific care arrangements.*

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CHOOSING CHILD-CARE: MANY OPTIONS

Mary P. Rowe, Ph. D.

M. I. T.

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"We're going to get married while we both finish up in engineering", said Roger, bringing in Anne, his fiancée. "We want to marry, and probably to have one or two children and we want to know how to combine careers and parenthood. Also we want to know what is best for the children....how should we take care of them?" Most people Roger and Anne's age are asking these questions. They are finding many different answers. Answers for parents can be many and various, for they depend on people's values, on people's jobs, on resources and friends and relatives available. And "what is best for the children" is also not easy to answer. Above the level of flagrant abuse, there appear to be many acceptable answers as to what is best for children.

How to combine various jobs with having children, used to be a pretty straightforward issue for most couples. The tendency was to follow one fairly standard pattern; a few people varied it a little; fewer varied it a lot. This meant that in most husband-wife families---perhaps 80% of them--there were two or three or four or more children, with the father as the only bread winner, except for pin money brought in by the mother for work done^{o*} home. Other less frequent variations included the mother in part-time or full-time work outside the home.

In the 1980's in the United States, all indications are that there will be many different, basic child care patterns built around changes now manifest in labor force patterns and fertility. This article discusses some of the changes

in society which mean new child care patterns are developing. Then there is a description of the many different child care arrangements in existence today, (though these are still far from uniformly available as options.) This is followed by a brief discussion of the pros and cons of various arrangements and how to choose among them.

To begin with, the full-time labor force participation rate for men has been declining. It may be down to about 70% by 1980, for a basic 30-35 hour week. This means that only 70% of all men aged 16-65 will be in paid, full-time work or looking for work, at any given time. Others will be in training, on leave, early-retired, out-of-work, or working as fathers and househusbands.

On the other side of the coin, the labor force participation rate for women has been increasing. It will probably be at least 70% by the 1980's, ^{counting part-time and full-time employment.} Thus paid-work patterns for most women will be increasingly similar to those of most men, for most of their lives. This will be especially true for the probable tenth of all women who will never marry and the ten to twenty percent who we expect will have no biological children. We expect that perhaps another 50% of all women will have only one or two children; they too are likely to lead working lives much more like those of their men than has been true in the past. These groups taken together will establish a mode of paid work for all women very different than the traditional mode of the 1950's.

Already the modal family has changed enormously. In place of the traditional, male-as-sole-breadwinner family, (which now accounts for only a third of two-parent families in the U.S.), nearly half of all husband-wife families now have both spouses in the paid labor force. In addition to these extraordinary changes in labor force participation we will probably see a further great change in family economics. From the 30% of family incomes brought in by U.S. wives in 1975, we will probably see 40% brought in by the women of the 1980's. And probably at least a fifth of all wives will earn as much or more than their husbands.

Changes in marriage patterns, toward divorce and unusual family forms, are expected to continue into the 1980's, although families as such seem here to stay (Bane, 1977). I estimate that in the 1980's at least half of all children will spend at least two years of their childhood in a "non-traditional" family. Most of these will be living during such periods with single parents. At any given time, probably 75-80% of all children 0-16 will be living with two parents, or with parents and step-parents. However probably more than half will have lived in a family different from the traditional nuclear type, for a significant period of their early lives.

All these changes may be expected to occur in the context of very swiftly changing values about men and women. We expect that in the 1980's it will be widely accepted that women are equally, or nearly equally, financially responsible for their families. These changes will be fostered and acknowledged by equal rights laws. Both men and women will become step-parents in very large numbers. Possibly as many as half of all children will know a

temporary or permanent step-parent at some point during their childhoods; possibly a third of all parenting adults will live with a step-child at some point. We cannot know exactly what the prevailing practices will be, about the financial responsibility of mothers, but it seems likely that divorce and remarriage of custodial mothers will result in a further acceptance of the idea of equal financial responsibility of all women, including those in two-parent as well as one-parent families.

By the same token, our values about men and homemaking and child care seem to be changing rapidly in some segments of the population.¹ The earlier stereotypical view was that marriages might, for a variety of reasons, have both parents in paid jobs, ^{but} However it was presumed that such marriages would not, on the average, be as happy as where mothers stayed home. More-
~~over, it was~~ ^{early research findings suggested that most common} ~~assumed that in most circumstances~~ ^{ordinary} mothers would remain chiefly responsible for homemaking and child care even if they also held a paid job. There have of course always been many ~~ex~~ceptions, but a large number of American men now appear to have been changing their views very rapidly in the 1970's. A 1976 Gallup poll reports that men who believe in relatively egalitarian marriage are now far more likely to report their marriages as "very happy". And a fair amount of evidence, including this same poll, indicates a considerable shift for about half of American men, toward egalitarianism.

In the 1980's more men will become single parent fathers, through death, divorce and adoption. (The proportion of single parent males has already

1. See for example, Fein (1976), Levine (1976), Pleck (forthcoming), Rowe (1976), and the new panel data from the Institute for Survey Research at Michigan.

increased to about a tenth of all single parents.) Family patterns also change due to the sharp increase in the number of wives who are major or chief breadwinners. All these facts will mean that the social and legal rights and expectations of men with regard to child care may be expected to continue to expand during the 1980's. Thus changes in labor force participation, in fertility, marriage, divorce, and sex-role attitudes have combined to permit very wide ranges of child care patterns and customs.

Child-Care Arrangements in the Early 1970's

Recent nation-wide surveys of child care arrangements illuminate the very wide variety of child care patterns now existing. By and large, they vary by age of child, by type of parental employment, by family income, number of children, and arrangements available.

To begin with an examination of the traditional norm, (that mothers are the chief or only child carers), we find that most mothers are basically responsible for the children, although few are completely alone in this endeavor. Only about 3% of all households have a child under 10 and use no form of care besides the mother in her own home, (Unco, 1976,²). And only 7% have a child or children aged 10-13, and report no child care at all. In other words, nearly nine-tenths of all households with children under 14 do use some kind of care, once in a while, other than the mother in her own home.

2. Unless otherwise specified, detailed data in this article are from the Unco Study.

However many use very little care other than the mother. About a third of all parents report using care very briefly, for only about an hour per week. Another 30% use care 1-9 hours per week. These brief arrangements usually involve the spouse (52%), an older sibling (30%), relatives in their own or the child's home (33%, 27%). Others include baby sitters (26%) and the child alone at home (12%).

Thus in about 75% of all homes with 0-13 year olds the mother is the principal, and essentially the only care taker. This is clearly the dominant mode of American child care. This dominant form is mitigated in a major way only by hours children are in school, from age 5 or 6, and by the brief babysitting hours, described above, totalling fewer than ten hours per week. Of the remaining quarter of all families with young children, 10% of the children are in care 10-19 hours per week, 4% for 20-29 hours per week, 2% for 30-39 hours, 6% for 40-49 hours, 3% for more than 50 hours. This group constitutes the second major mode of child-rearing.

There are two major, recent sources of data on the kinds of child care used in two-career families for pre-adolescent children in the States. The Unco study examined all households using at least ten hours of care per week and concluded that only a third of the mothers in these households were in paid jobs. (Others may have been in school or training). The major types of care used by the households in this study were a relative in the child's home or (20% and 25%), and care by a non-relative in the child's home or another home another home (16% and 20%), for a total of 81% of all care more than ten hours per week. Another major study also looked at care over ten hours per week for 0-12 year-olds, whose mothers were all in paid work. Here again relatives (including siblings) accounted for 32% of all care-takers, non-relatives in the

child's home or another home for 37% of all care, for a total of 70% (Duncan and Hill, 1975). The Unco study, and comparison of the two studies, indicate that relatives are somewhat more likely to be child carers for children whose mothers are not in paid employment. But in any case, family is plainly still very important in American child care arrangements. And families and neighbors combined account for a very high proportion of all child care hours.

Reading both of these studies and other available data (see for instance Levine, 1976) suggests that in about 10-20% of all households where both parents are employed, that parents share much of the child care. Two-parent homes with a primary househusband are quite rare--under 5%--but homes where men account for substantial child care are now a distinct mode.

Day care appears to be somewhat less prevalent than many observers might hope or fear. Recent studies find all formal child care arrangements, taken together, to comprise not more than 8 or 10% of all arrangements, and not more than 20% of all major arrangements (those over ten hours per week). Day care (including nursery school, Headstart, before and after school programs, as well as programs called day care), is a major source of child care only for pre-school children with mothers in paid employment, in the rather rare areas where such care is available.

How To Choose a Child Care Arrangement

How should a young couple choose? One is tempted to answer: "Without too much concern". Of course parents should choose child arrangements with thoughtful care, finding as many possibilities as they can, and then learning

all the details about each possibility. But no one should feel bound to seek the "one right method", or to feel that any given, careful decision needs to be permanent.

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But if a couple like Roger and Anne opt for a more egalitarian mode, as a great many U.S. students assert that they wish to do, they will have another kind of cost-benefit reckoning to do, in terms of risks and potential ^{benefits} lying ahead. If each of them can find half or three-quarter time paid work, while the children are small, the family will receive one, or one and a half salaries for these years.

Suppose each parent works thirty hours a week in a paid job. Suppose further that they use child care twenty to thirty hours per week, including evening babysitting, and that otherwise they split home-making and child care responsibilities by dint of some job-staggering. They will each get to know the children and the skills of homemaking; they will have a chance to spend some time alone together, and perhaps even some time at church activities or volunteer work.

These spouses will probably have a much keener sense of each other's lives. The typical "learned helplessness" of each sex toward the other's role may never develop in Roger and Anne's marriage. As they share responsibilities they may feel much less taken for granted and less lonely than many fathers and mothers. Anne can still be very supportive of Roger's need to relax after the office though she works herself; and Roger can still help out in Anne's areas of domestic responsibility as well as some of his own.

Their family financial security, as well as actual income, will grow more rapidly than if ^{either} one were the ^{sole} family breadwinner, as lifetime earnings and the ability to find and keep a job depend much more on continuous years in the labor force than on hours per week. Promotions will probably come later for Roger and Anne, than for full-time workers. However, each can expect much higher life time earnings than if he or she drops out for very long, for family responsibilities. Thus despite their expected later promotions, egalitarianism permits much higher (and more secure) family earnings. Though the strains of keeping two jobs going, as well as domestic responsibilities,

may restrict their external activities in some ways, we would expect that the quality of life for these two may never the less be good; each will have several arenas for friends, status, productivity, and self image. Both spouses will have work areas, at home and in volunteer work, where there is considerable autonomy over one's work. Anne may get more sleep and more recognition than if she lived a traditional life; Roger will gain more options for self-expression and perhaps a respite from the competition at work.

If either is left alone, through death or divorce, he or she is more likely to survive in both paid work and family life. (Men who equally care for their children have, in practice, more rights with respect to custody and visitation). One can imagine that when Roger and Anne retire, from child raising and paid work, they will be much more comfortable, under circumstances where they both have a wider range of skills and interests. Their mid-life crises may also be less severe, with a wider range of options offered by two sets of skills and two incomes in the family!

Many couples may choose to share family responsibilities this way, so completely that neither spouse ever drops out of school or job for family reasons. But other couples may choose to have one or the other spouse a full-time homemaker for a period of time and to alternate who is staying home. And many couples may need to have both full-time in paid employment, using child care 30-45 hours per week, at least until the youngest child is in school. The important question is the decision, early on, to share homemaking, financial responsibility and child care. Many couples seem to be making the new model work very well.

How To Choose a Child Care Arrangement

Ideally a couple would begin discussing child care as they begin discussing life together. In the opinion of this author, decisions about child care arrangements are the most fundamental decisions a couple will make, in terms of the roles they will occupy in and out of marriage, for the rest of their lives.³ These decisions, especially if the couple has more than one child, are likely to predict how both partners will spend their time for at least 10-15 years.

A couple anticipating a birth will want to take stock of the parents' careers, of their present and anticipated incomes, of all the possible child care alternatives and of their places of residence and work, (in relation to commuting to work and to care arrangements if any).

They should discuss all possible relatives and friends, and visit and discuss all available alternatives, including trading child care hours with friends. Many couples may even consider moving or changing schools or jobs to permit easier care arrangements. The major elements of choice will be time of commuting, price of care, reliability of care, and special elements of care that a given child may need at a specific time. The price of care should carefully be balanced against the life time earning expectations of a spouse that would otherwise stay home.

3. For a further statement of this point of view, see Dinnerstein, (1976) and Rowe, (1977).

Most communities have libraries and community health programs with access to Day Care and Child Development Council⁴ materials on how to choose child care, how to monitor arrangements, how to evaluate or even become a family day care taker, how to begin a play group or child care center, on how to find lists of local child care facilities, including those with particular ethnic or other characteristics. In the United Kingdom one should

Reading and talking with local experts is most important in cases where parents and/or children have special needs.

All young parents should keep two major rules in mind: their children are much likeliest to thrive if the parents are happy about their work and child care decisions, and if the caretakers are stable, responsive and consistent. Innocent

and non-innocent bystanders can nearly always safely be ignored.

Summary

Young couples, such as the hypothetical one described, would do well to undertake a flexible, careful and continuous examination of child care options. They should have available plans for several different arrangements, at any given time and over time. Most probably they will consider a variant on the theme of Anne as chief caretaker, but not necessarily. If their marriage is egalitarian, they will find more and more of the law, and more and more young couples agreeing with their values, and their chances of a very happy marriage may be

4. The Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.,
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greater. If they decide for the use of child care arrangements, the number of hours they use child care will probably depend on how the caretaking parent (s) spend their time. The type of arrangement will vary with age of child, price, distance from home, and the number of children they have. The effects of their child care arrangements, if the arrangements are stable, responsible and carefully chosen, will ~~probably~~ ^{even more} depend chiefly on the parents' values, and feelings ~~and~~ ^{attitudes and behavior} than on the specific care arrangements.

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