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CHILD CARE FOR THE 1980'S:

TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES OR ANDROGYNY?

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CHILD CARE FOR THE 1980's: TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES OR ANDROGYNY?

Child care?

INTRODUCTION: TRADITIONAL SEX ROLES IN CHILD CARE

A young father in Massachusetts recently watched his wife die of cancer, leaving him and their five young children. Responsible, caring, grief-stricken, he went to the Welfare Department, planning to quit his job, go on welfare, and stay at home until the youngest child was in kindergarten. "It is tasteless in our society for a man to stay home", he was told. "We will find foster homes for your children". The young father protested, unwilling to lose his children and unwilling for them to lose him, each other and their home, as well as their mother. His feelings were finally heard, but not until our traditions about child care had been vividly dramatized: Responsibility for young children lies with women and the primary role of women is to be with children (Pope Paul VI, 1976).

In this essay we discuss parenthood and child care from the point of view of sex-roles rather than of institutions. Many people use the words "traditional child-care" in a different way, to mean "care within the institution of a nuclear family". For these people non-traditional care then means care in an institution different from the nuclear family, say, a commune or day-care center or a 24-hour state nursery, or a household following death or divorce, or a lesbian household. I on the other hand, will use the words "traditional child care" to mean responsibility for children and care of young children by women, under circumstances where men would find it difficult to care for those children and where only women

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would be comfortable doing so in our society. Thus, day care and 24-hour state centers, foster care, care by divorcees, and lesbian households might all be "traditional child care", in my sense, if the female child carers perceive themselves to be constrained by sex-role stereotypes so powerful that neither they, nor would-be male child carers, have the freedom to negotiate who will care for the children.

By the same token, androgynous child care, according to the definitions of this paper, might occur in families, centers and other institutions, and occurs wherever both men and women have equal options to negotiate with themselves and each other who will care for children. (Of course there is a shading, from tradition toward androgyny, along a continuum where women and men experience different degrees of options, which may vary by age of child, or family income, or other individual circumstance.)

This paper discusses present-day child care arrangements, and some consequences of our present arrangements. The negative consequences of traditional arrangements are seen as part and parcel of the negative consequences of American sex role stereotypes as a whole. The paper concludes with discussion of further androgynous options for parents and what is needed to support those options in terms of laws and of human attitudes.

PRESENT-DAY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

About four-fifths of American households with children under 14 are in nuclear family form (Unco, 1976).¹ (I estimate however that

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about half of American children in the 1980's will live for some part of their childhood with a single parent or in some other non-nuclear family arrangement.) About 90% of all households with children under 14 now use some kind of ^{Child} care (other than the mother in her own home) at some time in a given week; more than half use care more than an hour per week; about a quarter use a child care arrangement ten or more hours per week; about an eighth use care thirty or more hours per week.

The main types of care are relatives in one's own or another home, or a non-relative in one's own home or another home. Day care centers, cooperative programs, nursery and pre-schools, and before and after school programs, together comprise only a maximum of a tenth of all arrangements. 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".

Multiple arrangements are very common, with over half of all care-using households reporting the father as a regular, supplementary caretaker, three-tenths regularly using an older sibling and an eighth regularly leaving children alone, in addition to the relatives and non-relatives and formal care reported above as "main types of care". Hours that children are in school are also an important "child care arrangement" for two-ninths of all children under 14.

Of interest to the present discussion, ^{Though} ~~we find~~ ^{are} fathers ~~estimated~~ as fewer than ten per cent of all "main types" of child care, ~~but~~ they are

clearly "helping out" significantly, as noted above. How much are men becoming involved in child care? There is scattered evidence of the importance of men as child carers in some specific groups of the population. For instance, among the families of professional psychologists, roughly a sixth to a quarter of the care of the children is reported to be by husbands (with non-spouse arrangements on the same order of magnitude and mothers caring for children 60 to 70 per cent of the time) (Brysons, et al, 1976). The Michigan Survey Research Center study of five thousand American families is also reported to have found many men comparably engaged in child care,

And about 8% of all children under 18, who were reported living in non-nuclear families, were ^{in 1974} in non-nuclear families headed by a male, ~~in 1974~~ (BLS, 1974).

On the other hand, time budget studies of several years ago showed that employed mothers spent seven to ten hours more per week on total work and work-related activities (including commuting, homemaking, child care and paid employment), than did employed fathers (Holmstrom, 1972; Walker, 1970; Szalai, ed., 1973).² And the "extra" time devoted by employed mothers was predominantly in child care and homemaking. Moreover there is some reason to believe that fathers, on the average, got more sleep and had more time in leisure activities than did mothers, (Harris Poll, 1970; Szalai, ed., 1973). The mothers, in fact, appeared to get less than optimal sleep on a regular basis. (Szalai, ed., 1973).

Some evidence has indicated that the amount of time spent by employed fathers on child care and homemaking, depended primarily on what these men were otherwise doing; it did not depend very much on whether the mother had a paid job or on the number of children in the family (Walker, 1970). On the other hand, some studies appear to indicate that husbands/fathers have performed a little more housework and child care when wives/mothers are employed, the increase usually expressed as an increase in the percent of total homemaking taken on by the husband. (Hoffman and Nye, eds., 1974). My own experience also indicates that many women believe this is the case. However, I now believe that the major shift that occurs when a wife/mother takes a paid job, is that the total amount of family-work time drops very sharply [by half to a third (Walker, 1970)] and that because the husband's family-work time stays nearly the same, he is doing a larger proportion of the homemaking.

On the basis of my clinical experience I believe there may also be a shift in type of work performed by husbands (from less urgent to more urgent). Moreover, the standard deviation in amount of family work performed by all husbands may be rising. That is, I believe more husbands may be doing either less family work because of moonlighting, or more, because of a shift toward androgyny by younger men, while the "average amount of family work performed by 'all husbands' " has risen only a little in the 1970's.

Of course these statistics on child care arrangements tell us nothing certain about the attitudes of the child carers and the extent to which they are or feel constrained by sex-role stereotyping. But we find fathers as primary care givers (as distinguished from being regular supplementary care-takers) for only a ~~few~~ *small* per cent of American children and mothers as the primary care givers for nearly half of all US children. Moreover, most mothers retain basic responsibility for children most of the time, and seven-eighths of all households use non-maternal care only 30 hours per week or less, out of the 168 hours in a week (Unco, 1976). It is easy therefore to hypothesize that serious sex-role stereotyping with respect to children is very important in the US.

Comparable statistics do not exist for other countries. We know that in predominantly rural areas of the world, ~~that~~ it is usually women who care for children, at home or at work, and usually together with other women, or that older children care for younger children under the eye of a nearby adult. In other industrialized nations more like our own, sex-role differentiation appears to be as common as in the United States. In at least eighteen other nations with time budget surveys, patterns are reported similar to those in the US. (Roby, 1975; Szalai, ed., 1973).

In the Soviet Union, top government officials will say "we believe women to be better suited to child care"; Soviet fathers are kept out of maternity hospitals, have no paternity leave the first year of their child's

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life and practically no men are involved in the day-to-day formal care that affects perhaps 40% of Soviet urban pre-schoolers. (Rowe, 1975). In China (Sidel, 1972) and in Israel (Gerson, 1971) comparable sex-role differentiation obtains. Thus even where widespread child care systems are available, they are traditional according to my view, and tend to maintain the women-with-children stereotype.

Only in the United States and Scandinavia do we find significant, if small, proportions of men involved in formal child care. And only in Scandinavia and Cuba have top government leaders systematically asserted equal rights for men in the home and with children, and equal sharing with women of social responsibility for reproducing and socializing the human species. No where does that equal sharing appear yet to have taken place.

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Support for traditional practices and policies has generally rested on two grounds. First, it is asserted, women are biologically better able to care for children, and men are hormonally and morphologically better able to support a family.³ Secondly, it is asserted that a whole socio-economic system has been erected on the basis of the biological differences, and that this system is a good thing, because sex-role differentiation has been effective and efficient in getting done the work of the world. It is my point of view that differences in child-rearing capabilities and requirements formerly did mean that women were better adapted to child care, but that biological differences with respect to parenting no longer have much meaning in this era of ZPG, planned

parenthood and bottle feeding. Hormonal and morphologic differences in men may also have meant that males were in some societies better providers, in an age of hunting and frontier life. I believe this is not generally true in our services-oriented economy, where cooperation and human organization are so exceptionally important. I believe that the traditional social and economic sex-role differentiation is no longer helpful to industrialized society and that androgyny offers a more effective and humane system for child care as well as for other employment.

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF PRESENT-DAY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS?

A. EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Many experts in recent years have surveyed the evidence concerning

the effect on children of different child care arrangements. Extensive and exhaustive, these reviews regularly conclude that stable, responsive, consistent care is important, indeed critical, to young children. Recent studies also conclude that care of this nature can be delivered by a variety of different kinds of people, men and women, teenager and grandparent, single and multiple attachment figures, in a variety of settings, (Fein, 1974; Howell, 1973; Kotelchuck, 1972; Talbot, ed., 1976). While questions have been raised about the effect of 24-hour care on children in institutions (Bowlby, 1951), in kibbutzim (Bettelheim, 1970) or in 24-hour centers in the Soviet Union (Rowe, 1975), or of too much violent television, by and large it is very difficult to demonstrate long-term

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effects on children from any kind of non-abusive care and education arrangement (Rowe, 1974a; White, et al, 1972). The public consensus in the United States also appears to be swinging toward a belief that child care may help socialize children, especially those in small families, (Morgan, 1975; Unco, 1976) and that parental employment and child care may make children more independent. It seems reasonable to conclude that many types of arrangements are suitable for children, where the environment is safe and supportive and there are consistent, warm, responsive, stable attachment figures as caretakers. (Talbot, ed., 1976).

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On the other hand, numerous observers believe that families need more support (Howell, 1976; Talbot, ed., 1976), that children are happier when they see more of their fathers, (Green, 1976), and that children might be happier with several different parental figures to turn to instead of depending exclusively on over-worked, isolated mothers (Howell, 1976). And many people are deeply concerned by the number of children under ten who are now regularly left alone or who are in abusive care situations---numbers which may total ten per cent or more of our young children.

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B. EFFECTS ON WOMEN AND MEN

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Our traditions about women and children bring great joy and happiness to many men and women. Others have for decades ignored the traditions, equally happily. Still others were brought up in different traditions, where

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women shared financial responsibility and/or men shared in all nurturance activities; many of these people and their families have also thrived.

There are many women and men however who are not happy either ignoring the modal tradition or living within it. And still others are happy for years with traditional sex roles and then feel constrained and confined and frustrated and bewildered. In this discussion we will concentrate on the difficulties with traditional roles with respect to child care since we are concerned mainly with providing options. (Androgyny includes people being free to behave traditionally, so options are more available than in a traditional setting where only the ordinary sex roles are appropriate.) The ensuing discussion presents what I see as negative consequences of our present child care arrangements. In a larger sense these consequences are due to the whole pattern of sex role stereotyping rather than just to child care. And, as we noted above, there may be several reasons why sex role differentiation occurred in the first place. At present however, I believe child care arrangements have come to symbolize all the reasons for sex roles; they are perhaps the most powerful remaining institutionalization of our stereotypes. It is in this sense then that I present some consequences of sex role differentiation in the context of consequences of child care arrangements.

The Sense of Separateness of Men and Women

The presumption that children and family were women's work has, I believe, led through our early socialization patterns to an extraordinary

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segregation of most men's lives from most women's lives, especially in industrialized societies. In my own work I am continually impressed by the extent to which men and women do not understand each other's experience.

More damaging yet is the frequent presumption that, at base, men and women cannot ultimately understand each other or live the same life-- style. Liberal men will often support the entrance of women into, say, engineering. But then, if someone asks about men in child care, this same liberal may ask, "But could men really take care of children as well as women?" The Soviet Union and China assert complete equality for women. These countries have, however, desegregated only lower and middle level "male" occupations, leaving child care, homemaking (and top-policy positions) as segregated as ever. Conservative--and radical-- women also often speak as if only women could care for children. We are all accustomed to hearing very conservative women speak this way but it is sometimes as true for radical women. Revolutionary feminists deplore the oppression of women which may result from women's traditional child care responsibilities. But then some radical feminists turn to discussion of gestation in test tubes, and child care in 24-hour day care centers, in a way which appears by exclusion to accept the notion that fathers and children might damage each other's lives. In other words, some feminists reject the oppression of individual women, but then turn to day care (provided largely by women), as if it were an improvement. Some improvement may in fact occur; the care takers are

usually paid, (at low rates), and sometimes have each other to talk with, but the traditional sex-role pattern obtains.

Another result of traditional thinking is that large numbers of men and women, including, sadly, some parents, have concluded that children and/or child care are too much for them (as distinguished from those who limit their families for idealistic reasons). For example, Ann Landers recently reported that 70% of 10,000 parents who wrote her about having children, reported that they "would not do it again". And a recent Gallup Poll reported that one in ten of all mothers, randomly surveyed, "regretted having children" (McCall's, 1975).

Loneliness

Present child care arrangements are lonely for many parents. Isolated mothers and paid caretakers are often lonely; men who commute and moonlight and do not see their families are often lonely. Marriages where one spouse is a homemaker, working 99 hours per week, and the other works overtime or moonlights up to 80-90 hours per week, are hard on communications. The disproportionate numbers of depressed young mothers (Radloff, 1975) illuminate the sadness of spouses with not enough chance to be with those they love.

Moreover, in many of the shared parenting arrangements that now exist, the parents both work full time in paid jobs, with one or both, (often the father), in charge of the children during hours when the parent(s) should be sleeping. (Of course the children may then also be

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sleeping). Here the parents share care, sometimes at the price of sleep. However since our society as a whole is set up for paid workers without child care responsibilities (with fixed working hours and few 1/2 and 3/4 jobs), the parents may be able to earn two incomes only by staggering their work hours. This means that in many two-job families one parent is with the children primarily when the children are asleep, and also that the parents have little waking or sleeping time together.

Loneliness exacts a high price. There can be a sense of desperation and resentment when a spouse alone must care for a sick child or a rebellious child; there can be a sense of desperation and resentment when a spouse alone must face a lay-off, or middle-age without fulfillment. Sexual relationships suffer acutely when spouses are lonely.

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Financial Difficulties

Families with one wage earner are less secure than those where there are two. A single wage earner is under more pressure to succeed, to compete, to have to travel, to stay at a hated job in order to survive unemployment. A second wage earner provides a buffer, so his/her spouse may change jobs, or train or retrain. A widowed or divorced spouse without labor force experience faces a very bleak world, financially and psychologically. So also do the homemaker parents whose children have grown, who have no further identity to turn to. Finally at any given time we would have many millions more families on welfare, if both spouses were not in paid employment. Two wage earners obviously have a much

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better chance to provide a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their children.

Deprivation from Nurturance

Each parent faces a significant chance of widowhood or divorce. Most young men face single parenthood without enough training for the task and without equal rights to custody and child companionship and support.

Less often recognized is the gross deprivation of most men even where there is no widowhood or divorce. Too rarely, but occasionally, we deplore the spectre of men governing our nation, who have never taken care of a child, or an aged parent, or a pet, or even a plant. Occasionally, if much too rarely, we take note of the fact that modern managers and modern foremen need to be nurturant, sensitive and patient at least as much as they need to be aggressive, brave and tough. We see this perhaps most clearly as we view with concern a generation of women who might become managers without being socialized to take care of other people.

It is extremely rare for us to discuss in public what it means for individual men to be cut off from children and other direct, personal nurturant activities. The belief that men may reasonably spend their lives without the right or expectation of direct caretaking may lead to a variety of damage. One knows many men who do not physically or emotionally take care of themselves; who lose much of their joy in life by being cut off

from their feelings; who suffer considerably in childhood, adolescence and manhood by competing with other males; who have essentially lost the sense of meaning and continuity of life by being cut off from aged parents and children, by being sanitized at every turn, from human emotion. The sense of separateness and loneliness, bad as they are, seem to me mild, compared with the destruction of self involved in our cutting off many men from their nurturant selves and their caring potential.

Work Satisfaction; Leisure Satisfaction

Analyses of work satisfaction indicate that some people value work for the process of working, some for the product, some for the remuneration, some for work-group relations. Some value status, the chance for creativity, the sense of autonomy over one's work. Joy in leisure time activities is similarly related.

In traditional families each parent has only one work arena to seek satisfaction, friends, status, a sense of identity and a sense of challenge and growth. If the home environment or the paid work environment happens to provide the right processes, products, remuneration, friends, status, creativity and autonomy for the parents assigned to that environment, all is well. But for many people having only one work arena provides a severe sense of constraint. Leisure activities are often similarly constrained. Moreover the inequity of work-status and leisure-activity status between husband and wife in traditional families, means it is hard for many to maintain the love and comradeship which flourish between equals.

Finally, just the presumption that each individual will conform to the requirements of a stereotyped and arbitrary role is felt by many to be very constricting. This feeling has probably become more pronounced in recent years. In a simple society, role differentiation still permitted a wide range of expression. In the specializations of industrialism, much of this range was lost, so role requirements have become for many people much more constraining, and are felt by many to be destructive to individuals.

Economic and Educational Discrimination Against Women

Of all the difficulties caused by and symbolized by traditional child care patterns perhaps the best understood is economic discrimination against women. Discrimination against women is often alleged to occur with respect to education, job recruitment, promotion, benefits, work ambiance and the wage gap (unequal pay). The index of sex inequality most frequently cited is the wage gap between men and women; women on the average earn less than 60% of men's wages. Because the wage gap between men and women is easily quantified it is the most easily analyzed indicator of sex discrimination. Economists interested in discrimination often begin with some estimate of wage gaps and then seek to explain these gaps by controlling for education, years of experience, entrance into given occupations, and promotional patterns, thereafter assigning any residual gap to "pure" or direct discrimination. Many feminists look upon these studies as analyzing indirect discrim-

ination in order to isolate direct discrimination.

How much of gross wage gaps can be attributed directly or indirectly to sex role differentiation in child care, as distinguished from sex role differentiation in general? Here again, as with the rest of the discussion above, we cannot be sure exactly what part of discrimination is caused by, and what is symbolized by, differentiation in roles with respect to child care. We do know that, on the average, single women and childfree women have done better with respect to education, labor force participation, promotions and wages. And we know that these "success" patterns are in general reversed for men, who typically thrive better when married and with children. But we do not know enough about selection factors (what kind of women choose to remain childfree) or about indirect discrimination (what kind of women do men prefer to promote and pay well, other things being equal). And economists disagree on exactly how to analyze the gross wage gaps. Thus there is no exact one-to-one evidence on the discriminatory importance of sex roles in child care. On the other hand we do know some of the broad outlines of the effect of child care patterns and how they may affect economic discrimination.

To begin with, many economists believe that a large part of the wage gap between men and women can be explained by occupational segregation, (Kahne, 1975). Women are in general found in certain occupations which are in general paid rather low wages or not at all.

Systematically low wages in "womens" occupations are variously explained by "crowding", "tastes" and human capital theory. "Crowding" is thought to result in lower wages for women because women have unequal access to many jobs. This produces a crowding of women into a few occupations such that their average productivity in these few occupations is lower than that of men in other occupations (Bergmann, 1974). The "tastes" argument suggests that employers and consumers simply "don't like" women in certain jobs or "assume they are inferior" and therefore discriminate against them, (Arrow, 1972; Phelps, 1972). Both of these arguments would suggest that there is a psychological reason for denying women access to well-paying positions. Human capital theory suggests that women are on the average paid less than men because they are less productive and that they are less productive primarily because they are less well educated and trained (Mincer and Polachek, 1974). All of these theories find justification in empirical studies.

In addition to wage gaps produced by occupational segregation, most economists agree that part of the gross wage gap can be explained by differences in real and expected labor force participation: hours per week, weeks per year, years per lifetime.⁴ But most now agree that these differences are less important than those rooted in occupational segregation. And most also agree that straight forward unequal pay for equal work is of only minimal importance.

How do our traditional expectations about child care lead to wage

gaps? One may raise hypotheses all along the line, with respect to each theory above. Some have suggested that crowding and "discriminatory tastes" arise in part from a desire by males to compensate for not being able to gestate or nurse babies. This theory suggests that men have more need than women to create and control outside the family, and that they have a signal fear of competing directly with women because of a primitive fear that they cannot really compete, with respect to creation (Rowe, 1974b).

With respect to human capital theory, many have suggested that the reason that women ask for and are permitted less education and less valuable training is that they need less education because their chief role is to marry and have children. In the nineteenth century, prolonged study was widely believed too strenuous for female anatomy and also likely to weaken a woman's reproductive capabilities. Although higher education is no longer considered damaging to motherhood it is still widely considered unnecessary for mothers. Child care responsibilities, and the presumption that women would have full responsibility for children, still directly interfere with equal educational opportunities for women.

During the 1970's, in the course of my work in and around universities in New England, I remember many very direct statements on this subject. For example there was the admissions committee professor at a professional school who would admit women only if they "promise to stay celibate here". Many educational institutions have only recently permitted pregnant women to continue to study. Many others still do not have reason-

able provisions for part-time graduate work and residencies, for young parents.

By the same token, we still find daily stories of women asked in recruitment interviews about their family plans and contraception, of women not offered jobs or promotions or raises because of presumptions about their family life.

To the (relatively minor) extent that hours per week, weeks per year and years per lifetime are important in explaining the wage gap, it is easy to see a very direct connection between our traditional child care arrangements and labor force participation. With mothers in the paid labor force typically working a much longer total work week than fathers, it is easy to understand the direct conflict between paid and unpaid work.

Another area of economic discrimination where the relationship between labor force participation and traditional child care is very direct has to do with benefits--health care, vacations, pensions, Social Security. Adequate benefits coverage for men is yet far to seek, but for women the situation is much worse. Women produce nearly 30% of family incomes; GNP would rise by another estimated 20% if the unpaid work of women were included in GNP. Yet millions of women are without adequate health care, without vacation time, without appropriate pensions. This happens partly because much part-time work carries no benefits, because unpaid work in the home carries no direct benefits, because women as mothers have been considered their husband's dependents, and because

of the wage gap discussed above, which means women's benefits, where they exist, are often lower. All of these facts follow quite directly from the traditional vision of women as child carers.

Another and similar economic problem concerns our inadequate income tax deductions for child care. Money paid for child care should be reckoned as a business expense, which means it would be subtracted before the estimation of taxable income. Instead, and probably partly because child care is traditionally not paid for, we have an inadequate deduction which constitutes another economic discrimination.

Finally, as we consider economic discrimination, the subtle importance of traditional child care may be much greater than we know. (Rowe, 1976). To the extent that women and men maintain the image of women as dependent child carers, (despite the fact that women in paid and unpaid employment might actually account for about 50% of a properly reckoned GNP), it is easier for us all unconsciously to discriminate against women in paid work (and men in unpaid work).

In addition the woman whose total work experience has been in unpaid work may herself have a poor idea what she is "worth". As she considers paid work, she may have a tendency to think in terms of her "next best" (or "fall back") occupation, which is to be paid nothing in direct wages. Women like this, and men too, may think of her work as "not worth very much", and by extension the work of all women may seem not to be worth very much.⁵ Where "all women" can be imagined to be restricted to "nurturance", it is easier to think of women as all alike; one need not then worry about rewards to individual productivity.

As we consider our own homemaking and child care, which usually have no direct price, some may consider these activities to be "worth" very little, others may consider them "priceless". Many people in fact argue eloquently that no financial figure can approach the value of human care; they would hate to see all caretaking paid for. I find this feeling easily understandable. However I believe that if most nurturance is not to be cash paid it should generally be shared equally between men and women. One can, in other words, believe in the value of child care and all nurturant activities without accepting systematic economic and educational discrimination against women. In fact it is the premise of this article that one can believe in children and child care, without all of the separateness, loneliness, financial insecurity, deprivation from nurturance, work and leisure dissatisfactions and discrimination which are at present part of our inheritance from traditional sex roles.

What About Day Care?

We have argued that traditional child care may not now be ideal for children and parents and families. Many people, faced with these feelings, advocate universal child care external to the home, available 24 hours per day, and subsidized by government on a sliding fee scale basis.

Excellent child care would certainly speak to the needs of many children, especially those now left alone, the malnourished, the rat-bitten, the abused. Provision of better care for all children would directly improve the lives of a fourth of our population for a fifth of their lives. It would rescue at least ten percent of our children from

conditions that we ought to consider intolerable.

With respect to parents, the availability of excellent care would certainly alleviate some of the loneliness and much of the financial insecurity we discussed above. It is an absolute necessity for the tenth of all parents who are single, especially if they work outside the home. However day care delivered on a traditional, woman-oriented basis, as it is now, might not do much to alleviate the sense of separateness between men and women, the deprivation from nurturance, the work dissatisfactions, and economic discrimination. In fact, on balance, our present day care arrangements probably contribute as much to traditional stereotypes as they do to provide options. In particular, the employment of women in paid as well as unpaid child care arrangements probably substantiates the occupational segregation which is the strongest source of economic discrimination.

Full time day care, on the average about 8.5 hours a day, 42.5 hours per week, probably also causes some feelings of deprivation for some parents. It seems probable that if they had optimal choices, many parents would prefer to be able to take somewhat more care of their children than is the case with full time day care.

In summary of sections above, we have reviewed paid and unpaid U.S. child care arrangements, which suggest a strong sex role differentiation of the work and joy involved in having children. This author believes that this differentiation is one major factor in maintaining all other attributes of sex roles. More options with respect to child care, and new socialization

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patterns for both sexes, toward caring for children and others, might make a major difference in the quality of life for adults and children.

This leads us to a discussion of androgyny.

ANDROGYNY AND CHILD CARE

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Androgyny means that how people spend their time should be influenced primarily by skills and interests, not by gender. It would mean that men and women would equally share financial responsibility, child care and home making responsibilities.

Equal sharing of responsibility would not necessarily mean that men and women would exactly divide the laundry and the diapers and the bills. Rather, there would be a social and legal presumption that performance of these duties would be negotiated between spouses, on a continuous, life-time basis, with equal moral rights and responsibilities.

The theoretical basis of androgyny is the proposition that both men and women have both "masculine" and "feminine" potential with regard to character development (where "masculine" is taken in the traditional sense of "instrumental" and "feminine" in the traditional sense of "nurturant".) There is no presumption that individuals should (or could) all be alike, but that everyone has some nurturant and some instrumental potential.

In individual instances, of course, an androgynous society would support responsible childlessness and full-time homemakers that were female, as well as male. But the society as a whole would be set up to support male and female parents as wage-earners, and male and female wage-earners as parents, in whatever responsible patterns spouses might choose.

Let us take the example of a young couple with the modal one or two children. In a society which supported young parents to work in 1/2-3/4 time paid jobs, the family would receive one, or one and a half salaries. Suppose both parents worked thirty hours a week in paid jobs. Suppose further that they used child care ten to twenty hours per week including evening babysitting and that otherwise they split child care responsibilities. They would each get to know the children and the skills of homemaking and they would have a chance to spend some time alone together.

With respect to our list of concerns in the section above about the effects of child care arrangements, androgynous spouses would have a much keener sense of each other's lives. The "learned helplessness" of each sex toward the other's role, might generally disappear. Spouses who intimately shared responsibilities might feel much less taken for granted and much less lonely. One can imagine women being very supportive of a spouse's need to relax after the office and men who no longer dropped laundry on the floor.

Family financial security would grow, along with family incomes, since lifetime earnings and one's ability to find and keep a job depend much more on continuous years in the labor force than on hours per week. Promotions might come one to three years later for a typical worker who took a 3/4 time job while the children were small. However if the typical worker shared family responsibilities with a spouse, who also worked 3/4 time in a paid job throughout the years of young parenthood,

each could expect much higher life time earnings than if he or she dropped out for family responsibilities. Thus the expected later promotions permit much higher (and more secure) family earnings. We would expect that the quality of life for many people would rise, as they gained another arena for friends, status, productivity, and self image. Both spouses would have one work area at home where there is considerable autonomy over one's work. Women might gain more sleep; men might gain more options for self-expression and a respite from competition.

Spouses left alone, through death or divorce, would be likely to survive in both paid work and family life. Men who equally cared for their children would have, in practice, more rights with respect to custody and visitation. One can imagine that retirement from child raising and paid work would be much more comfortable, under circumstances where both spouses had a wider range of skills and interests. Mid-life crises might also be less severe, with a wider range of options offered by two sets of skills and two incomes in the family.

With respect to discrimination one may imagine that many of the direct sources of wage and promotional inequality might disappear in an androgynous society.

← Both men and women would have equal access to education, training and jobs. Many couples might choose to share family responsibilities so completely that neither spouse ever dropped out of school or job for family reasons. Other couples might choose to have one or the other

spouse a full-time homemaker for a period of time. Nationally, however, we might expect androgynous socialization and work patterns to produce a random distribution of men and women as full time homemakers. By the same token, sex-based wage differences now attributable to mobility, years of experience and hours per week in the paid labor force would also disappear as men and women began to spend their time in similar ways.

The physiological bases for work differentiation seem already much muted. Some jobs requiring great strength might remain forever disproportionately male. These however seem unlikely to produce national wage gaps between men and women. If there are hormonal differences of significant importance to work aggressiveness, these may persist. But we will not know to what extent, if at all, they are important until we have offered boys and girls equal options in cooperation and assertiveness. One may guess from cross-cultural studies that culture is enormously important and may "wash out" whatever minor hormonal differences exist.

Motivational differences between men and women (whatever they are) might be expected to have less and less effect on sex based wage and promotion gaps. Men who cared directly for children and others, would find gestation and nursing much less important than lifetime nurturance. Such men might conceivably be somewhat less driven to create (and to destroy). Women, on the other hand, knowing they would share financial responsibility, might work harder to be recruited, paid and promoted appropriately.

What would happen to the concentration and perseverance required for extraordinary intellectual, scientific, artistic achievement? One may guess that some people will always choose to stay single and/or childless. Others will find supportive spouses or communes or other family. Many will simply postpone achievement for a year or several years. In any case, the achievements will come to both men and women. fin

What of total social productivity? Is it true one must be young to innovate? Would the total number of innovations drop? There is some reason to believe that extraordinary scientific achievements now occur within several years of taking on new intellectual problems, rather than necessarily to young people (Tobias, 1975). (In earlier times, with short life expectancies and little accumulated knowledge and no information retrieval, genius may have been associated with youth.)

In modern times, genius often requires extensive teamwork, many building block experiments, and then a new look. It is not at all clear that having men and women in part-time work for several years would jeopardize creative breakthroughs over a lifetime; indeed many very innovative people have waxed and waned in creativity several times throughout a lifetime.

What probably is very important, from the point of view of social productivity, is that intellectual, artistic and social genius find options to flower. If we imagine for example, that scientific, artistic, and caring potential are randomly distributed to males and females, then we could nearly double the incidence of scientific, artistic and human achievements by opening all occupations to both sexes. Moreover, while some kinds

of achievements seem to require a lifelong, even celibate concentration, other kinds of work seem to require some relief from concentration. Thus children keep some people sane for the laboratory or factory, and the factory or laboratory keeps them sane for the children.

Finally, from the point of view of social productivity, we may discover that androgyny provides us with a more caring world. ^{6/5} Supposing more women, socialized to nurturance and cooperation, get into influential jobs? And suppose we also socialize our young males to expect to care for children and others? Might we see a re-ordering of values governance and management?

This article makes no pretense to the notion that sex role differentiation causes all evil and that androgyny will iron out all pain. If sexism begins to disappear, perhaps we will become caring enough to eliminate racism and other forms of human violence as well, but it seems likely that we will move only slowly at best. Some androgynous couples will divorce, and some men and women will be as miserable with more options as they were with fewer. There may also be children who would flourish more seeing their parents less. But on balance one may believe that freeing all humans' to share in child care on a part-time basis may bring more happiness to children and adults. Children will have a greater chance to be with someone who wants to be with them; both children and adults will be free to explore their caring and inventive selves.

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SOCIAL POLICIES IN SUPPORT OF ANDROGYNY

Present-day androgynous couples often find it difficult to combine paid work and family life in an equitable manner. One would therefore recommend changes in social policies which would make it easier for parents to share the responsibilities and advantages of home and paid work.

The first and most basic legal and social change should clearly be the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution. No other single change would be more likely to permit protection of males as nurturant parents as well as protection of women in public life.

With respect to the organization of paid work in our society, many changes are needed. First there should be a reconsideration of what is meant by "full-time work". At a time of structural as well as cyclical unemployment, it seems reasonable to ask whether full-time work should be redefined as 30 to 35 hours per week. This alone would permit young parents more time to share child care as well as spreading the work of the nation.

Part-time work (part-day, part-week or part-year work) needs systematic support for both sexes. Discrimination against part-time workers, in terms of promotion and benefits, should be forbidden. Benefits should be prorated, including pensions. In general we should take those steps which support "bumpy" career ^{paths} ladders, so that parents may work longer and shorter work weeks, depending on stage in the life cycle. Mandated seniority and promotional patterns, in union contracts and tenure ladders for instance,

should take account of periods of part-time work. At least 10% of government jobs should be set aside for part-time workers.

Employers have not traditionally been enthusiastic about the extra expense of extra sets of paper work involved in hiring proportionately more (part-time) workers. However I believe we need extensive research to see whether productivity per hour may not be higher for part-time workers. It may be that in many jobs part-time workers (more than) repay the extra expense involved in having proportionately more people.

We need many more flexible time jobs. Some employers can adopt the system whereby all employees may choose (sometimes for set periods of time) to come in between 7 a. m. and 10 a. m., to leave between 3 p. m. and 6 p. m. Others may wish to designate only certain jobs, for flexible time of a standard type, or individually designed.

Some jobs can be designated for people who need flexible, short-term leaves of absence. For instance we need more "undertime" jobs whereby employees can agree to accept 2%, 4% or 6% less salary, on a pro-rated basis, in return for five, ten or fifteen days leave of absence on a planned, approved and voluntary basis.

One important structure to support part-time and flexible-hour jobs is a well-run posting system within organizations. A posting system means all job openings are widely advertised for a certain period of time within a given organization. Supervisors describe the job opening, including a description of whether a job can be part-time, a shared appointment, a

flexible-hours and/or an undertime job. Such posting systems also serve the purpose of supporting career development and perhaps should be mandated by law or fostered by tax incentives.

In times of economic prosperity employers have been reluctant to institute work structures supportive of family life. However, with high turnover, worker discontent and budget crunches, many employers are considering shortened work weeks and flexible hiring plans as a way to raise productivity and cut costs. Undertime and part-year jobs in particular offer a chance to plan leaves of absence during work lulls; well-run posting systems help to alleviate the pain of retrenchment while helping protect long term employees.

Parental leave needs further change in most American firms. We should consider the parental insurance systems of Sweden, whereby parents have a right to paid leave up to seven months after a birth; (they can divide the time between them). We should further consider the Swedish system of parental sick leave for children's illnesses. At a minimum, maternity leave should be treated as a temporary disability, (with the possibility of extended disability). This minimum improvement should also include unpaid leave for either parent (after maternity leave ends), up to six months post-partum, and the right to use some days of personal sick leave for children's illnesses, for children under twelve.

Further changes should include reform of child labor and insurance laws so children can work (paid or unpaid) in non-exploitative apprenticeships. Our present segregation of children under age 16 from many work places

has the effect of keeping age groups unnecessarily apart. We also need changes in Social Security so that people over 65 can legally continue to work and earn, so that more grandparents are available to more children.

The definition of work itself needs change. If unpaid homemaking and child care by full time homemakers were reckoned into the GNP, and defined as "work", we might pave the way for redefinitions of Social Security, welfare, pensions and other benefits. If Social Security vested individually in all responsible (paid and unpaid) workers, it would be easier for both men and women to consider full-time homemaking, without all the present risks to displaced (abandoned, divorced and widowed) homemakers. If child rearing were seen as socially constructive work, AFDC would become payment for child care, with attendant benefits and pensions, akin to military service, military benefits and military retirement. Moreover if full-time homemakers were seen as responsible workers, socially as worthwhile as military employees, we would have a stronger theoretical reason for a universal health plan for all Americans.

Changes in the tax laws could also help family programs. Further tax write-offs to employers, for family support structures, (like the child care center write-offs), are badly needed. Work and training-related child care expenses should be a business expense for income tax purposes, and should also be allowed where payments are made to (non-spouse) relatives. Work and training-related child care allowances should be automatic for families earning incomes below poverty, continuing on a reduced basis

to a level up to 1.5 times the poverty level.

Finally, we plainly need changes in marriage and divorce law. In further support of displaced homemakers of either sex, in addition to Social Security changes, we should consider government support for (re)-training parents who have been full-time at home for, say, ten or more years. And all of the myriad laws surrounding custody, alimony, visitation and child support should be changed toward equity between men and women.

How could we support further attitudinal change toward androgyny?

First we need much more national information and debate. Many ardent feminists of both sexes understand women in engineering without understanding men in nursing and child care. Yet it is obvious that women will never be equal in formerly male occupations without a mirror image change occurring for men. If this were not to occur---if men were not to have equal opportunity in formerly female occupations---women would wind up doing 3/4 of the nation's work. This fact, and its attendant implications for socialization patterns and educational curricula, need the widest possible discussion.

Fortunately we may presume that androgyny itself may foster androgyny. Early generations of children raised by both men and women, who see caring men and self-reliant women, have androgynous role models to emulate. Today's parents, knowing that a daughter has one chance in two of becoming a chief wage earner for at least part of her life, are beginning to support daughters in androgynous patterns. This in turn has

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inevitable consequences for the lives of men. Perhaps if we succeed in social policies which support androgyny we will reap the benefits, in terms of increased options for men and women and children. If we lag in supporting androgyny, we may see yet more anguish, in terms of personal bewilderment, and of children left more and more alone.

I believe that many men are tired of being asked why they want to take care of children, of themselves and of others. Many women would like to be asked. Many women are tired of being asked why they want a paid career. Many men would like to be asked. Androgyny offers some new options, for child care and child carers in 1980's.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the data in this section are from the Unco National Day Care Consumer Survey.

2. In recent years there have been a number of household time budget studies, which however have varied greatly in methods and population sample. At least one early study attempted to measure the division of labor between husband and wife without including child care, an omission which seems extraordinary in its illumination of post-war sex-role stereotyping.

3. The "biological differences" hypotheses for origins of sex roles have generally been based on several ideas:

a) women need to be protected somewhat in pregnancy and while nursing;

b) originally only women could feed infants;

c) men are on the average a little more aggressive and stronger;

d) men perceive themselves as unable to "create" and "nurture" in the same ways as women, and feel themselves "isolated" from the cosmic chain of generations. They therefore must find some alternative ways of feeling their lives have cosmic meaning and therefore have a stronger urge to build monuments and/or destroy and kill, in order to feel important;

e) because men have external genitalia which change shape in one kind of creative and masterful activity (intercourse), men have a particular need for their creations to be visible and recognizable and for their work processes to provide the possibility for promotion, advancement, status and dominance.

4. Absenteeism and high turnover of women used to be considered possible reasons for systematically paying women less. Most labor economists however now agree that absenteeism and turnover figures are very much more strongly affected by occupation and rank than by sex.

5. I believe this to be a leading reason why the high cost of excellent, formal day care comes as such a shock to some people.

6. One notes with interest that Matina Horner of Radcliffe is finding men significantly less "cooperative" than women in an ongoing research study. Traditional sex roles, especially with respect to child care, may have made many men less nurturant and cooperative than women.

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