

ED 317 699

CE 054 115

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 TITLE Mixing Careers and Child Rearing. Background Paper No. 31.  
 SPONS AGENCY Department of Labor, Washington, DC. Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency.  
 PUB DATE Sep 89  
 CONTRACT 99-9-4789-75-045-04  
 NOTE 40p.; In "Investing in People: A Strategy to Address America's Workforce Crisis" (CE 054 080).  
 PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Adults; Birth Rate; Childlessness; \*Child Rearing; \*Day Care; \*Dual Career Family; \*Employed Women; Employer Supported Day Care; Employment Patterns; \*Entrepreneurship; \*Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Family (Sociological Unit); Flexible Working Hours; Labor Utilization; Parent Child Relationship; Personnel Integration; Salary Wage Differentials \*Family Work Relationship

IDENTIFIERS

## ABSTRACT

The issue of combining careers and child rearing has come into public consciousness because so many more women with children now work. This means that there are many more families where both parents work. Women are voicing a growing sense of disillusionment regarding earnings, occupational segregation, child care difficulties, and performing two full-time jobs. They are dropping out of promising careers and starting their own businesses. Barriers to combining career and child rearing include standard business practices, such as the lack of schedule flexibility; entry barriers, such as finding child care; and hours of work. The average employed married woman with children works the equivalent of more than two full-time jobs. Men are experiencing the tradeoffs of combining career and child rearing at an increasing rate, but still significantly less than their spouses. If women cannot participate in the labor force to their fullest capacity, the marketplace is deprived of some of its most productive workers. Fertility in the United States has declined dramatically. Given the demands of careers and the costs of children to careers, many women and men appear to be making an explicit choice between career and child rearing. Policy implications for dependent care, employer flexibility, and management sensitivity are discussed; a research agenda is identified; and 39 references are included. (CML)

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past two decades, the separation of the worlds of family and work has begun to break down irrevocably. The separation of these two domains depended upon a traditional family structure with a division of labor between a male breadwinner and a wife at home. This family type, however, has become a distinct minority. Our labor force is coming from a much more diverse set of family arrangements where clearcut distinctions between participation in family and careers cannot be applied. We are in the midst of a major social transition. The new workforce is very different, but the terms of employment have barely begun to reflect this change.

Nowhere is this mismatch more severe than in the conflicts inherent in combining career and child rearing. It does not take a great deal of insight to realize the degree to which the demands of raising a family without a support system at home are incompatible with the traditional structure of a career. Yet there has been remarkably little effort to accommodate these conflicting life tasks. The reason for this lack of response has a great deal to do with the fact that as a society, we have barely begun to align our values with the new social and demographic facts. We are still far from reconciling collective

conflicts between women's competing roles as mothers and as the source of needed human capital in our economy. The issues raised go to the heart of how, as a society, we address the needs of an increasingly diverse work force, maintain and enhance our productivity, and provide nurture and support to future generations of workers.

Children - and child rearing - are not, however, the only issue. Nor are they uniquely a woman's issue. The drastic reduction of the traditional support system (the wife at home) that used to permit the male breadwinner to devote himself entirely to his work has had many other impacts. For instance, there is less support for elderly parents or relatives as female caregivers join the labor market. Nor, in a less serious example, is there anyone left to let in the plumber when both spouses work. Fewer and fewer people are immune from the changes taking place as a once common sexual division of labor within the family gives way to a multitude of different roles for women and different family arrangements.

This paper will explore the issues of careers and child rearing; sorting out the origins and sources of the conflict; the barriers to combining them; and what can be done to lessen the burdens of the transition.

#### NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of combining careers and child rearing has come into public consciousness because so many more women with children now work. The magnitude of the change can best be understood by looking at how dramatically the world differs from what it was just over a generation

ago. As recently as 1960, just 38 percent of women over age sixteen worked. Now 55 percent of women work. (This is more than any other country outside of Scandinavia.) Seventy-five percent of them work full time. They will account for nearly two-thirds of the net additions to the labor force during the next 12 years and represent 47 percent of all workers by the year 2000 (Johnston, 1987). Even more profound is the increase in the percentage of mothers with children under the age of six who work: from 12 percent to 54 percent between 1950 and 1985.

A major consequence of these trends is that there are many more families where both parents work. In one-half of all married couple families and in 80 percent of married couple families with children under the age of 13, both spouses are in the labor force. In female-headed families with children under age 18, nearly 70 percent of the women are in the labor force (BLS, 1989). The net result of all this is that most parents are working and make up some 37 percent of the total U.S. labor force. And the vast majority of them have no support system at home to care for the children while they work. In a very real sense, the issue of combining family and career is not just a concern for women.

Not only are women increasing their share of the labor force, they are far more represented in many occupations that used to be nearly all male. Between 1970 and 1983, for instance, women's share of technician jobs went from 34 to 48 percent, of lawyers from 5 to 15 percent, of natural scientists from 13 to 20 percent, and of accountants and auditors from 25 to 39 percent. As of February, 1986, women constituted

the majority of professional employees in the U.S. economy (Bloom, 1987).

Women are now the majority of college graduates. In the past 15 years, their proportions of the graduating classes of many fields has greatly increased. In 1983, they received 45 percent of accounting degrees, 36 percent of law degrees, 36 percent of computer science degrees, and 42 percent of business degrees (Johnston, 1987). Even in traditionally underrepresented areas like engineering, the percentage of women receiving masters degrees went from 1.7 percent in 1973 to 9.3 percent in 1983 (Trost, 1986).

In a very real sense, women are indispensable to the economy. They are nearly half of the labor force. They are educated. And they are a vital source of the human capital needed in the years to come.

In spite of the great economic opportunity that women's entry into the labor force in large numbers promised, there is considerable evidence that, for most women, the gains have fallen short of expectations. As Victor Fuchs has noted, by one measure, (effective income per hour of work), women have made gains but have still lost ground compared to men over the period 1960 to 1986 "because of the increased burden of work on women who took paid jobs but still had substantial responsibilities at home." The only women who experienced a large increase in well-being relative to men were young, white, well-educated, and unmarried (Fuchs, 1988). For them, of course, there is no conflict between career and child rearing - at least as long as they remain childless. For most other women, however, the ledger is

decidedly less positive and the outward signs of frustration are growing.

One symptom of this frustration is a whole body of popular literature that has developed over the past decade or that is dramatically revising the optimistic picture of women's expectations. (see, for instance, Morrison et al, 1987; Collins et al, 1988). From "you've come a long way baby" and the nonsense of the "Aviance Women," many observers are documenting the growing sense of disillusionment. There is a palpable sense that the middle class American Dream needs revision. Yet there is really no new vision to replace the "Leave it to Beaver" family of the 1950s or the woman who can "have it all" vision of more recent times.

The frustration being voiced may, in part, be due to unrealistic expectations. In retrospect, the promises of equality and opportunity that rang so clear during the past two decades were overstated. For instance, after a spurt of progress during the 80's, the ratio of female to male earnings has stabilized around 65 percent. In spite of visible changes, many of the patterns of occupational segregation have persisted. Key indicators of occupational segregation reveal "considerable persistence in segregation by sex" between 1960 and 1980. And these are in sharp contrast to trends in segregation by race. Younger and better educated women did achieve some gains but even for these groups, "segregation by sex is substantially larger than segregation by race" (Fuchs, 1988).

In 1985, women were over 33 percent of all executive, administrative, and managerial positions as opposed to 22 percent ten

years earlier (Franklin, 1985). But these women were disproportionately concentrated in the low to middle management positions. A Time survey in 1982 reported that women were only 5 percent of the executive positions in the 50 largest companies. And a Korn/Ferry study indicated that women held only 2 percent of top executive positions (Korn/Ferry International, 1986). It can be argued that this shortage of women at the top is only a matter of a time lag as the swelling ranks of women in the mid-level positions move up. Many observers, however, feel that this is not a situation that time alone will change.

Other evidence that women are experiencing serious difficulties in the traditional labor force is that the number of small business start-ups has doubled in the past ten years and women are accounting for a greatly increasing share of them. In 1976, women owned 5 percent of all small businesses. In 1985, women owned 25 percent of small businesses and the Small Business Administration estimates that half of all businesses will be women-owned by the year 2000 (Franklin, 1985). The same trend is true for self-employment. There were 2.8 million women who were self-employed in 1985, up 43 percent from a decade prior. In the same period, the number of self-employed men rose by only 9.8 percent. This trend is not necessarily bad for the economy overall but is clearly evidence of the failure of larger institutions to assimilate many highly qualified and ambitious women.

Another clear sign of the failure to accommodate female participation is provided by studies that indicate that even well-educated women in promising careers are more likely to drop out than men. A Fortune magazine survey, for example, showed that women

MBAs from top business schools had left the management track in large corporations at a rate 50 percent higher than their male colleagues (Taylor, 1986). A study at a major international company recently documented that of potentially high performing employees, women had dropped out at two and one half times the rate of men (Schwartz, 1989).

And this is not just a phenomenon that affects only upper middle class women. The types of problems that women are facing are a function of their family situation, their educational level, income class, and career aspirations. For the welfare mother, a failure of the work place to accommodate the demands of caring for young children can mean the difference between escape from poverty and the status quo. For the woman attempting to secure the relatively high pay of the factory assembly line the practices surrounding shift work present serious barriers to overcome. For example, a common policy of requiring entering employees to work second or even third shift may mean that she will virtually never see her school age children during the work week even if she is able to arrange for child care. And all working parents who seek to combine a successful career or job history with parenthood without the benefit of a wife or full time caregiver at home find themselves strained to the limit attempting to perform two full-time jobs while many colleagues/competitors at work have only one.

While we cannot know for certain that all of the above indicators are primarily women's responses to frustrations in attempting to combine careers and child rearing, they are at the very least consistent with the other data that show the tremendous stresses women with children are under. And when combined with the data on the difficulties that women with children are having at work, they provide compelling evidence of

the nature and scope of the problem and the need for business and government to take steps to address it.

#### BARRIERS TO MIXING CAREER AND CHILD REARING

The central problem is that our thinking about careers is shaped by outdated assumptions regarding who is having them. First of all, let us choose a simple and straightforward definition of a career as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur, 1984). Often without thinking about it, we tend to make a number of specific assumptions about how these experiences will happen. We often assume, for instance, that career paths will be linear, with unbroken progress toward ever more responsible and demanding jobs. We assume that people will devote themselves to the job as if the job were all that mattered. And we assume that this upward pattern will be convenient and attractive to people at all points in their lives (Bailyn, 1984). In some ways, our assumptions are so ingrained about what careers are all about that they are never subject to question.

For the women with children, for the dual earner couple, indeed for anyone with caregiver responsibilities, the traditional model does not fit well. Workers are no longer homogeneous. Most have some sort of significant, time consuming, family responsibilities for at least part of their lives. The inflexibility assumed in a system where, as Kanter describes, people work "as if" there were nothing else that mattered, puts onerous burdens on people who cannot make total commitments to the job at all times (Kanter, 1976). The traditional assumptions about career don't work without the traditional wife.

Consider the intersection of the stages of a traditional career with the traditional family life cycle (Voydanoff, 1987):

<u>Family Cycle</u>	<u>Work Cycle</u>
Establishment	Novice in career
New Parents	Early Career
School-Age Family	Middle Career
Post-Parental Family	Late Career
Aging Family	Post Exit

The staging of these two cycles poses quite a problem without the traditional division of labor between husband and wife. Commitment to career is assumed to be highest at a time when family responsibilities are most demanding. During this time, working parents are logging in hours equivalent to two full-time jobs while trying to compete with those without significant dependent care responsibilities who can devote themselves fully to one job (see below for full discussion of hours). For a single parent or a dual earner couple, coping with this situation often causes serious overload and stress. Since men rarely share equally in home chores and child rearing, the burdens on a working mother trying to combine traditional schemes of career and family are often overwhelming.

One way that parents, and women in particular, have previously attempted to reconcile these work and family cycle issues is to sequence the stages, with the woman dropping out of the labor force in order to have children. When the most demanding period of child rearing was complete -- say when the last child entered school -- the woman would return to work and attempt to re-establish her career. Sequencing was

the way the few women who did successfully combine parenting and high achievement in another era did it. Extraordinary women like Carla Hills and Jeanne Kirkpatrick followed a sequencing pattern. The problem with this solution is that for the vast majority of women, leaving the workplace for a period of time usually has grave career consequences. It violates the very norms that we have used to define the pattern of a traditional career. Whether it involves a woman leaving the "fast track", or losing seniority, or just letting skills degrade, the consequence is lower earning potential and being seen as one who is not "committed" to the job. Moreover, it is no longer economically feasible for a family to forego the income of one adult member for an extended period of time. It is well understood that most women work out of economic necessity.

Standard business practice

One observer has commented that the modern corporation has been built to the specifications of Ozzie and Harriet (Levitin, 1988). Many of their practices impede the full participation of anyone with significant responsibility for children. These include rigidities in hours and location of work; demands regarding overtime, travel, and relocation; and the lack of supportiveness for family issues as reflected in the behavior of supervisors and more generally in the culture of a company.

One of the very obvious practices that unnecessarily limits the contribution of women with children is the unquestioned adherence to the 40 hour work week. While there are doubtless jobs where this is a rational unit of measure, the loyalty seems generally unfounded. For

example, businesses who have worried about the negative reaction of customers to less than "full-time" people have often learned that customers are far more concerned about high turnover among their account representatives than about not being able to reach a representative at all times during the day.

This adherence to the 40 hour model not only militates against the creation of meaningful part-time opportunities, it creates a climate where incumbents of part-time jobs are viewed as having less short- and long-term commitment to the company. Because of this, one innovative employer, NCNB Corporation has even changed the term "part-time" to "select time" to overcome the negative connotations of the term.

Many companies have instituted flextime in order to respond to the need for greater flexibility in scheduling. One recent study indicated that about one in eight full-time workers is on some type of flexible schedule (Mellor, 1986). However, while employees of all types value flextime, there is some evidence that it does not provide much benefit to working parents, especially when applied in a rather limited form (see, for instance, Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981). The needs for flexibility go far beyond changes in the starting and ending times of a 40 hour week. They include the need to adjust hours and even location of work on a fairly routine basis for such mundane but essential purposes as attending to chicken pox, taking time off to attend the championship soccer game, the trip to the child's dentist, and extend to the need to modulate the degree of work involvement overall, according to the needs of the phase of family life cycle.

While individuals are afforded very little personal flexibility, there are many jobs, on the other hand, that demand a great deal of flexibility on the part of the individual. These demands include required overtime, attendance at breakfast, evening or weekend meetings, travel, and relocation. While some of these demands (such as travel and relocation) affect primarily professional employees, lack of control over hours of work and the lack of ability to make up time or not be penalized for absenteeism due to sick children is even more of an issue for lower level employees. Employers often assume this type of flexibility and employees who are unable to provide it are labeled as deficient or lacking in commitment.

The problem of expecting the employee to provide all the flexibility is a serious one for both employers and employees. At one large petrochemical company, for instance, an internal study revealed a relocation refusal rate of 26 percent with major factors being the career of the spouse and concerns for children's education. Other sources pegged the refusal rate nationally at 24 percent (Winfield, 1988). Our studies show avoidance of jobs with shift work and overtime to be a significant factor for non-exempt employees. Clearly, relocation and overtime are unavoidable aspects of some jobs. But to fully use our labor force, we will have to find other ways of broadening experience and defining jobs. Moreover, the inability to be flexible at one stage of life does not necessarily have to be a litmus test of employees' long-term career commitment if family obligations are only temporarily at odds with these needs. In fact, in a study conducted by the authors at a large financial institution, there were no long-term

ambition differences between parents and non-parents (Rodgers & Associates, 1986).

In all the companies where we have collected information on the trade-offs between work and family issues, one of the most fundamental concerns voiced by employees with children was the tendency to be judged on effort instead of contribution. Especially in the service sector, where women are well represented, the output of many jobs is difficult to assess objectively. As a result, employees report that supervisors tend to rely on perceptions of the amount of time that people are working instead of the output produced. For the employee with significant family time commitments who places very high value on being productive during the available hours, this often feels like outright discrimination. Just being present for long hours often becomes a proxy for both contribution and for commitment and loyalty to the company.

A final barrier to working parents is the type of climate within the company with respect to work and family issues. There is some evidence that one of the most important predictors of stress is the degree of support a parent receives from his or her supervisor (Galinsky, 1988). This in turn usually reflects the spoken or unspoken policy of the company regarding supportiveness for employees' family needs. A company that is not explicit in its willingness to accept the legitimacy of family issues in the work place will inevitably bias the overall culture to be unsupportive toward working parents.

What the preceding issues make clear is that businesses that operate within the framework of the traditional career path will impose severe hardships on their employees with children and may actually make

them less productive and more costly. There is increasingly no such thing as a career contract that is valid throughout an employee's work life. The terms of engagement have to be continually re-negotiated as life circumstances dictate (Bailyn, 1988). An employee may be entirely able to make the traditional type of commitment for certain periods and then scale back temporarily to manage the care of children or aging parents. If any deviation from the traditional norms of the contract is viewed as a lack of loyalty or lessening of commitment, both the employer and the employee will lose.

#### Barriers to entry

One major barrier to workers with children has little to do with the expectations inherent in the traditional career model. This barrier is the child care support system that allows parents to work in the first place. Child care is frequently difficult to find. Once found, it often is in an inconvenient location, can have hours and vacation policies that do not conform to the work schedule, and frequently fails to meet parents' expectations for quality and cost. It can also be unreliable, especially when one considers that the child care industry experiences turnover in excess of 40 percent per year. And for odd-hour schedules, it can be virtually non-existent.

Locating care for a child is a major problem. There has been a great deal of discussion on whether or not there is a shortage of care (Connelly, 1983; NCJW, 1988). What does seem certain is that there is not enough care that satisfies parents' quality standards and is affordable. A 1987 study based on a Special Census Survey showed that 13 percent more mothers with children under 6 would work if affordable

care were available (O'Connell and Bloom, 1987) and a National Conference of Jewish Women Center for the Child study indicated that, of women who decided not to return to work for their prenatal employer, 20 percent said that not being able to make "satisfactory child care arrangements" was a deciding factor (NCJW, 1988). A Bureau of Labor Statistics study showed that the lack of affordable child care was a major barrier to women returning to the labor market after childbirth (Bloom, 1984). These data suggest that policies to attract women with young children (one of the only demographic groups that has significant potential to increase its participation) could attract large numbers of new workers.<sup>1</sup>

If the data on supply and demand are ambiguous, the testimony of parents seeking care is not. In survey after survey, large percentages of parents indicate that the search for care is very difficult. In a 1987 Fortune magazine survey, 20 percent of parents found locating child care "difficult" or "very difficult." For those with infants, 33 percent had difficulty (Galinsky and Hughes, 1987). In another survey of working parents, nearly 50 percent of mothers with new babies indicated "very serious" (29%) or "serious" (19%) problems in arranging care (NCJW, 1988). Our own surveys of employees in large corporations show consistent results, with from 20 to 40 percent of respondents indicating substantial difficulty (Rodgers & Associates, 1983, 1986, 1988).

What is not always well understood is that the problem in arranging care is not just a matter of lack of supply or of cost. There is also a serious problem in finding what care does exist. Day care

centers apart, there are virtually no centralized and well-publicized listings of providers. A large proportion of child care is provided by family day care homes. Even if they are registered with state licensing authorities, there is no easy way to get their names and addresses. Moreover, even if the parent knew whom to contact, the search for actual vacancies is a time consuming and frustrating task.

Problems in finding care do not stop with the initial arrangement. Family day care homes, the major source of care, are notoriously prone to turnover. It is estimated that as many as 60 percent of family day care providers turn over every year. Staff turnover in centers is estimated to run at about 40 percent (Galinsky, 1988). Turnover for caregivers in the child's own home is probably even higher. Because of this, care arrangements break down with relative frequency for many parents. In the Fortune survey cited above, nearly half of the parent sample reported missing work at least one day in the three prior months. Of these, half were for family-related reasons. Either the child was ill and could not be placed in care or the care itself broke down. Numerous other studies have documented the high degree of correlation between problems in child care and stress, absenteeism, and lower productivity on the job (see, for instance, Fernandez, 1986 and Galinsky, 1988). Given the highly patchwork system of child care in this country, these problems are routine and costly for both employers and parents.<sup>2</sup>

### Hours of work

One of the most difficult aspects of combining career and child rearing is the sheer number of hours involved. Common sense tells us that people who are responsible for child care and home chores in addition to a job will have time for little else. And since working women are usually heavily involved in both household tasks and child care, it should not be surprising that they bear far heavier burdens than those carried by single and childless people.

What information is available on this subject tends to corroborate the commonsense notion. Fuchs has compared men and women between the ages of 25 and 64 over the period 1960 to 1986. During that time, the average annual hours of paid work (all women included) increased dramatically, from 572 to 997 hours. For men, the average number of work hours fell slightly, due in large part to declining labor force participation (from 87 to 80 percent). Time spent on unpaid housework and child care declined for both groups, in part because of more childlessness and smaller family size. (Of course, women spent more hours in both of these categories than men at both points in time.)

The net effect was that women increased their total paid and unpaid hours by seven percent while men decreased theirs by the same percent. "As a result, by 1986 women were putting in more hours of work than men, whereas in 1960 the reverse was true" (Fuchs, 1988). And the biggest differential was for married women.<sup>3</sup>

A study conducted at two large companies with over 10,000 employees in 1986 provides additional evidence of the burdens on women with children (Burden and Googins, 1986). In this study, the number of

hours were tabulated by the same three categories: job, child care, and home chores. The differences among parents and non-parents were pronounced. Married women with children worked an average of 84 hours a week, compared to single or married childless individuals, none of whom worked in excess of 56 hours. Single women with children worked an average of 79 hours per week. And married male parents worked in excess of 72 hours per week.

The results say volumes about the difficulties of combining work and child care responsibilities. The average married woman with children worked the equivalent of more than two full-time jobs. Married male parents were not far behind. The differential in hours worked clearly creates an unequal playing field. Parents, especially women, are at a substantial disadvantage vis-a-vis all others who work, to the tune of 20 to 30 hours per week. Such a differential cannot help but show up in performance on the job and in frustration for the individual attempting to juggle two roles.

There were also explicit tradeoffs with jobs. "Married female parents and single female parents reported two to three times the rate of absenteeism as single male parents and married male parents." In fact, the study noted that the women in two earner families with children may be playing an important role in making it possible for their male spouses to work, since male parents had the lowest rate of absenteeism.

Women bear the burden. Fifty-seven percent of the female married parents in the above study reported full responsibility for home chores and child care versus only six percent of married males. There are some

indications that the distribution of work and the accompanying stress may be shifting, however. A recent study of how men and women allocate time to home chores turned up some changes in the past several years (Robinson, 1988). After a long period of stability in the unequal distribution of home chores, a shift to a more equal distribution was detected between 1975 and 1985. In that period, the time that men spent on home chores went from 7 to 10 hours while for women it declined from 22 to 19 hours. While this hardly constitutes equal sharing, the trend may be moving toward a smaller differential.

The evidence that exists seems to be fairly consistent. With respect to time, women with children operate under a substantially more onerous set of constraints than men. They are still shouldering many of the burdens of the division of labor in the traditional family. Without specific accommodations, the burden of performing multiple roles may be impossible for many women. Yet in neither the home nor the workplace has much accommodation taken place.

#### *IMPACTS ON MEN*

The focus on the subject of mixing career and child rearing has appropriately been on women. The combination of the two is still at this point in time far more difficult for them than for men. And they carry the added baggage of cultural factors that male parents do not have to face. Nonetheless, there are signs that combining the roles is becoming a problem of parents, regardless of their sex. Most studies still compare the experiences of all men to all women. However, when younger men and women are looked at separately the differences between

the sexes appears to be narrowing. This is particularly true in the growing number of families where the income between spouses is similar.

Men have become enmeshed in the problem mostly because they are married to women who work. (There is an increasing number of male-headed families with children, but the absolute numbers remain small.) In many of the studies where both male and female employees are polled on the conflicts and difficulties of combining careers and family concerns, men indicate that they are under increasing stress. In the study mentioned above (Burden and Googins), there were almost as many fathers as mothers (36 versus 37 percent) who said they experienced a lot of stress in balancing their work and family lives. In the Fortune magazine study (Galinsky and Hughes, 1986), for example, only slightly fewer men than women -- 37 versus 41 percent -- said that the job interfered with family life. Slightly more men than women said that they refused a job, promotion, or transfer because it would mean less family time.

In our own studies of large employers, men indicate that they, too, are beginning to experience serious difficulties. In a large survey undertaken for Dupont de Nemours & Co. in 1985, employees were asked to indicate what degree of difficulty they experienced in locating child care for overtime, sick child care, and in planning vacations around family schedules. At that time, more than twice as many of the women said that they had a great deal of difficulty, compared to the men. Three years later, in a similar survey that repeated these questions, the percentages had changed dramatically. The percentage of women reporting great difficulty had changed only slightly or slightly

declined, while the men had either approached the women on the measured items or caught up to them (Rodgers & Associates, 1988).

At this point in the transition, it seems that men are experiencing the tradeoffs of combining career and child rearing at an increasing rate but still significantly less than their spouses. The conventional wisdom is that men do not feel as committed to the care and nurture of children as women. Changes in men's roles have been slow. Even in a country like Sweden, where equality of the sexes is an actively supported public policy and there are far more family supports open to both men and women, the changes have been slow (Haas, 1988).

Attitudes toward family and child rearing and the predominant role of women in these activities are deeply ingrained and will not be modified overnight. But men's participation in the child rearing is growing and this trend is likely to continue. Men are already showing the effect of being members of two career families. They are refusing to relocate because of family responsibility. They are beginning to resist jobs requiring a great deal of travel. And as more women attain earning equality with men (in dual career couples, 17 percent of the women have greater earnings than their spouses) the sharing of the tradeoffs will likely increase.

#### *IMPACTS ON BUSINESS AND SOCIETY*

##### On business

Businesses need skilled human capital to survive and thrive in today's competitive global economy. The consequences for business of failing to accommodate the increasing numbers of women are a reduced

pool of talent to draw from, more turnover, and lost productivity. There are high costs to business of recruiting valuable talent, training it, and replacing it if it leaves. There are benefits foregone when skilled human capital does not perform up to its full capacity. With the supply of younger workers decreasing, recruitment costs are becoming more important. As the skills needed in today's economy become more complex, the cost of losing a trained employee becomes higher. And as the need for a highly productive and committed workforce becomes essential to our competitiveness, a work environment that decreases the likelihood of motivated and committed employees becomes a dead weight on growth and productivity.

Women are an increasingly large portion of our stock of skilled human capital, especially of those with college education. Since over 70 percent of all women in the labor force are in their childbearing years, obstacles that reduce businesses' access to or ability to utilize this resource become serious competitive issues. If women cannot participate to their fullest capacity, the marketplace is deprived of some of its most productive factors. This applies to women who would work but cannot do so because of their child care problems, as well as women who are in the labor force but whose productivity is constrained by inflexible practices and insensitive managements.

#### On society

The consequences we've been discussing are well understood in relation to individuals and businesses. When we start to consider the impact of these changes on society as a whole, the patterns of effects are harder to pin down although they are profound. One question in

particular seems especially troublesome: how, if at all, do the problems surrounding combining career and children affect the general welfare of children in our society, our future labor force, and people's propensity to have children at all?

The fertility trends are well known, if not easily predicted more than a few years into the future. Fertility is in a long term downward cycle in nearly all developed countries. Recent trends in the U.S. have been fairly dramatic. In 1960, there were 118 births per thousand women of childbearing age. In 1986, there were only 65 births, well below the replacement rate of 70. In the same period, the percent of women aged 25 to 39 with no children in their household went from 18 to 28 percent and the percent of women between 25 and 44 who were not married went from 17 to 31 (Fuchs, 1988). Some analysts project that the proportion of childless women now in their late twenties who will never have children will probably exceed 25 percent, compared to the 5 to 10 percent rate that had been the pattern (Bloom, 1986).

What is particularly noteworthy is the number of college educated women who say they do not intend to have children: nearly 20 percent (Bloom, 1984). Given the demands of careers and the costs of children to career, many women and men appear to be making an explicit choice between career and child rearing. Childlessness is also on the rise because of increased infertility brought about in part by delayed childbearing--also potentially a career-related choice. A direct cause and effect relationship has not, and probably cannot be determined. However, studies of successful women show that women who are high corporate achievers are less likely to be married or have children than

are men in comparable jobs. In one 1985 study of executive men and women, 97 percent of male executives were married, while only 54 percent of female executives were (Sutton and Moore, 1988). A similar study looking only at senior female executives found that 65 percent of those under forty did not have any children and 61 percent were married (Heidrick and Struggles, 1986). This is in sharp contrast to men in similar positions, virtually all of whom are fathers. This statistic sends a clear message to younger women about the tradeoffs that must be made to achieve success at work.

If these fertility patterns persist across population groups, we will be guaranteed future labor shortages. If people with education forego children, moreover, the public may end up having to invest more heavily to ensure that children from less educated families with fewer resources have the skills needed for the future economy. It is also worth pondering whether there would be any negative effect of having more and more childless people as leaders of our largest institutions. While there are many ways for people to stay in touch with youth and "the future" (presumably desirable in a leader), having children is the one we have relied heavily on in the past.<sup>4</sup>

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

If our goal is to reconcile better the demands of parenting and careers three major things must happen:

- o There must be far more support for dependent care so that more parents can work, so that the care that exists more closely matches the conditions and location of work, and so that the next generation of workers gets a proper start in life;

- o The workplace must offer employees much more control over hours and location of work, more alternative career paths, and an ability to be judged by contribution, not just hours worked;
- o Managers and supervisors must be more sensitive and supportive to employees with family responsibilities. In order for this to happen company leaders must acknowledge the importance of accommodating the family as a business necessity.

The findings of this paper point out the need to make basic changes in the culture of the workplace that is still operating as though we all live in families with wives at home serving as our support system. The kind of changes that are needed must and will happen on a micro level. No one can legislate cultural change nor will it come about unless businesses, one by one, come to appreciate the compelling business case for change. For most of the last twenty years, business has had the luxury of adjusting to the changes in the American family with a surplus labor pool to cushion the effects. This labor pool is growing far more slowly now and the changing demographics will now accelerate the rate of change. And a more articulate and empowered younger work force will demand change.

In our view, it is appropriate for government to play a significant role in bringing about the changes listed above. It can play a major role in addressing the needs for dependent care and can itself serve as a model employer in accommodating the needs of parents who work.

What government will be able to do in the short run, however, is limited by three factors. First, there is a perceived lack of public consensus on the proper role for government in this matter. (We used "perceived" because there is evidence that the public sees spending

money on matters like child care to be a priority.) Second, even if the federal government were to arrive at a definition of its role, budget constraints severely limit what it could accomplish. Last, the nature of the problem means that major solutions must be in the hands of employers who will have to decide the extent to which they will modify or change their policies and procedures to meet the needs of a more diverse work force. In this latter arena, we have historically allowed government a very limited role.

Before we can even begin to address the public policy options, however, we need to question whether we can even approach a consensus on what the objectives of public policy should be. Should we as a nation expressly support the notion of parent working and recognize in some official sense our economy's dependence on them? If so, can we support working families without devaluing the minority of families that still sacrifice income for a mother to stay home with children? Moreover, should we embrace the view that what happens to children during the early years of life is not purely a private concern of parents but has implications for the future of us all?

The current administration is committed to child care policies that spread scarce resources between low income parents who work and those who don't. If the purpose of a new child care policy is to support individual families with children regardless of their choices to work, this proposal makes sense. However, if the purpose of the policy is also to support the needs of the economy and the labor force, it probably does not. The competing child care proposals now being considered by Congress reflect the highly charged and value-laden

atmosphere in which we now find ourselves. In the current environment it is not easy to see how public policy with clear objectives to support the labor force participation of working families can emerge.

Policy alternatives: dependent care

The public policy arena that has been most extensively discussed to date has been the role for government in the nation's child care system. The major policy options outlined have been: 1) Federal assistance through tax credits to low income families regardless of whether both parents work. 2) Various approaches to shore up the child care infrastructure including in some cases promulgating minimum federal standards. 3) The provision of funding to pay for part of the child care costs of low income and lower middle class families who have all adults employed in the home. 4) Tax credit incentives to encourage businesses to provide child care to their own employees.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, most government exhortations to business in the work and family arena have focused on child care, the one work and family area where no business can really address the full range of need of its workforce without a government partnership. Most analysts believe that the major deterrent (beyond cost) to more employer involvement in dependent care is that the child care marketplace itself is so disorganized and confusing that it is difficult for employers to "buy into" it. Efforts at all levels of government to encourage employers to do more in the child care area through the provision of various tax credits have not worked and are unlikely to yield many results in the future.

It is difficult, under these circumstances, to imagine government policies that are effective without addressing the problem of basic infrastructure. At the State level, this means fixing cumbersome and inadequate regulatory systems. It also can mean taking action on such matters as removing antiquated zoning barriers that keep child care out of residential areas where it is needed most. At the federal level, this means providing some funding to community-based organizations whose job it is to coordinate child care resources, do planning, help parents find and select care, and assist providers to offer what parents need. These basic market clearinghouse functions are missing in the current child care structure. (These type organizations are usually referred to as resource and referral agencies.)

There also does not seem to be any alternative to government at some level helping with the affordability of care for those who cannot work without it. Increasingly, this means families who may be considered at the low end of middle income will need support through expanded income tax credits or direct subsidies. As child care costs rise with the inflationary pressures brought about by a shortage of child care workers, the cost of care versus the economic benefits of working will tip against working without more public support. Capping this support to families with gross incomes of \$20,000 (as now envisioned in the Administration proposal) will not be sufficient.

Were the government to fulfill the above functions in some way, businesses could then help create supply specifically geared to workplace circumstances and could eventually help pay for some of the costs of those already employed for whom continued employment is a

business priority. Business could do much more if a baseline community structure were a public responsibility. For example, in the field of services to the elderly, this baseline has existed since the 1960s with the passage of the Older Americans Act. This has created community-based organizations all over the country with the responsibility for coordinating services, keeping basic data and attracting public and private sources of supply. While this system has many flaws, it makes elderly services a more organized and rational marketplace in which to make decisions.

Flexibility and management sensitivity

In the area of making workplaces more flexible and sensitive to families, the potential for government action is more limited. The possible options are:

- o Government as a major employer can lead by example;
- o Government can assume a role of educator and facilitator encouraging and disseminating examples of flexibility and work-family sensitivity;
- o Public policy could mandate the availability of part-time work and flexible hours directly or through increased scrutiny and sophistication in the Equal Employment Opportunity Process;
- o Government can remove any existing barriers to flexibility that were once thought to be necessary to prevent the exploitation of workers (i.e. work at home, limitations on hours worked per day) but may actually now be an impediment to the needs of families;
- o There may be areas of the law where equity considerations prevent differential treatment for family-related reasons which can be redressed by legislation.

For the purposes of education and encouragement the government can lead by example. As a major employer it can support dependent care needs, create flexibility of all types, and train and hold accountable

its management for daily work practices that are sensitive to employees family needs. It can publicize its own efforts, identify and publicize the efforts of employers who make real flexibility breakthroughs, and produce materials and hold conferences and meetings that educate others to the benefits of these practices. It can also fund evaluation and research efforts that explore new approaches to work organization.

Mandated part-time work and greater flexibility of hours would certainly help to make these options more widely available. However, the type of changes this paper addresses are far-reaching and affect a company's very culture and must be worked out by individual companies. To be effective, they would have to be implemented voluntarily. In our view this means that even if mandates were politically feasible, they would probably be ineffective and unenforceable through an EEO audit or any other known means. How, for instance, would one measure day-to-day management sensitivity or detect long-term career effects of parenting with existing government enforcement methods?

Another option is for government to try to assure that as a regulator, its actions do not unnecessarily impede initiatives of private employers that aim at greater work place flexibility if the purpose of that flexibility is clearly to afford more support to families. This is very different from the intent behind efforts to increase part-time work in order to reduce an overall benefits package or increase the size of a supplemental or buffer labor force at the expense of a permanent one. In the interest of creating the more flexible environments that respond to the needs of working parents, we can expect employers to give more attention to flexible schedules, to

policies that permit employees to work at home, to more part-time options. All of these options will greatly increase the ability of parents to combine career and child rearing and might be encouraged through changed regulations.

There are, however, some counterbalancing considerations. Current Labor Standards at the Federal and State levels protect workers from working more than a certain number of hours per day or at home under certain conditions. Historically, unions have lobbied strenuously against some of the practices that we now see as offering freedom from the restrictive scheduling of the work place. Much of the apparatus of government regulation has been put in place to protect against abuses associated with freedom to modify schedules, to use part-time workers, to offer piece work employment. There is doubtless reason to remain concerned about possible abuses associated with practices that may offer today's more diverse workforce more flexibility, especially since it is not always easy to establish the intent behind these practices.

There are major obstacles to overcome in making it less costly for workers with children -- be they men or women -- to combine careers and parenting. Real progress will involve a partnership of business and all levels of government. There are specific roles appropriate to each. Since we are still in the midst of a major transition in our labor force, many of the roles for both business and government have not yet been fully defined or resolved. The changes that need to take place are, however, inevitable. It is too late to turn back; it is no longer possible to act as if the worlds of work and family are independent. We

can not afford to underutilize our human resources or jeopardize future generations of workers with policies that respond to yesterday's issues.

#### **RESEARCH AGENDA**

There are many gaps in our knowledge about the nature of the tradeoffs involved in career and child rearing and in the costs of the conflicts to individuals, business, and society as a whole. The major issues that require research include:

- o What are the most effective ways for employers to increase work place flexibility? What can be learned from experiments and practices from other countries? What are the costs and benefits of these practices to workers, to employers?
- o To what extent can policies and practices that afford greater support to parents attract new workers into the labor market? Will the gains made by attracting new workers be offset by reductions in work by current workers (going at least temporarily to part-time status)?
- o To what extent is productivity affected by family problems and responsibilities? Do employer supports like on site centers, greater flexibility, affect productivity indicators? There has been some research on these issues, but the methods of measurement have not been sufficient to yield good cost and benefit estimates.
- o Is it feasible in some industries to let people choose their hours of employment? Can the needs of business accommodate this type of scheduling flexibility?

NOTES

1. The importance of access to child care for participation in the labor force has not been lost on programs that aim at moving low income women from the welfare rolls to the employment rolls. The most successful programs are those that assure access to child care for women who need it. (Mass ET) The recently enacted Welfare Reform legislation in fact makes provision of child care a major ingredient in welfare employment programs. Without subsidized child care, women on welfare have very little chance to make a successful and long term transition to employment.
2. The good news is that turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness - and the stress on parents worrying about poor or unreliable arrangements - does decline with additional support from the employer. In one of the few studies to address the impact of child care supports offered by employers, it was found that providing such supports did reduce turnover and absenteeism (Mother in the Workplace Study, 1987). While employers cannot solve the child care problem alone, they can do a great deal to be more accommodating to parents who deal with difficult and unreliable care arrangements.
3. While these data tell a story that indicates a very unequal distribution of work, they are averages that combine hours of work for all men and women between 25 and 64.

4. The trends in the status of children are also very disturbing and may be related to some of the difficulties in the current lack of support for working parents. For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, there were significant declines in test scores, increases in obesity, in the rate of suicide, in the incidence of poverty among children. In fact the rate of poverty is higher among children than any other group. (Fuchs, 1988)

5. Analyzing all the issues related to dependent care is outside the scope of this paper. The discussion here is intended to give some of the pros and cons of various approaches from the point of view of the need to support the mixing of careers and parenting.

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