

**Toward a Jewish
Family Policy
Three Perspectives**



THE WILLIAM PETSCHKEK NATIONAL JEWISH FAMILY CENTER

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The William Petschkek National Jewish Family Center was created by the American Jewish Committee in 1979 as an expression of its commitment to the family as the indispensable social institution for maintaining and enhancing Jewish identity, communal stability and human fulfillment. Its goal is to promote research on family problems, help clarify family values and stimulate the development of innovative programs to help meet the needs of parents, would-be parents and their children. It also strives to encourage an awareness and responsiveness to those needs in the Jewish and general communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the most significant issues requiring deliberation in the 1990s are those concerning family policy. The American Jewish Committee Task Force on Family Policy identified the balancing of work and family responsibilities as the central family issue for the Jewish community. Others have pointed to the increase in single parent homes and the continuing blight of teen pregnancies as significant challenges to the health of the American family generally.

The following set of papers examines in detail a variety of family policy issues. Professor Gerald Bubis outlines the challenges to the Jewish community to strengthen its families and suggests a variety of new approaches that may be tested within the Jewish community. In particular, Bubis urges the community to confront frontier issues such as the rising cost of leading a Jewish life and to harness its considerable resources to pursue new avenues for enhancing the quality of Jewish communal life.

To be sure, the Jewish family cannot be understood in isolation from the general climate of family life. Thus Dr. Sylvia Hewlett urges greater awareness of the crisis surrounding the family, and how public policy in recent years has undermined the position of families with young children. Similarly, Dr. Jay Belsky asks that we weigh carefully the effects of day care upon infants and very young children, and advocates a variety of family policy initiatives beyond full-time day care. These include universal availability of parental leave and greater opportunity for part-time employment.

Jews, in short, are by no means alone in their family concerns. Measures that Jews advocate in coalition with others will legitimize greater activity and more initiatives within the Jewish community. By the same token, Jewish families at risk, particularly single parent homes, merit greater social policy targeting and consideration.

Finally, as Jews we can make unique contributions to the family policy debate. Jewish tradition understood family and community as closely intertwined. Strong families help ensure stable Jewish communities. And when the family is at risk it is the mandate of the community to strengthen family life.

This emphasis upon family and community runs counter to the current of individualism that has often characterized American culture. A value system that places so much

emphasis upon individual freedom and opportunity may not be conducive to public measures affecting what is ordinarily the private sphere of the family. Thus America lags significantly behind other democracies -- including Israel -- in providing day care, parental leave, child allowances, and other pro-family initiatives. Conversely, an understanding of the interrelationship between family and community can help nurture a climate conducive to public sector measures that will strengthen family life.

Steven Bayme, Director
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INTRODUCTION

The Jewish community in America has long been a vibrant and dynamic one, and it is this vitality that has allowed it to survive and thrive in a land of freedom and opportunity. The Jewish community has always been a community of immigrants, and it is this immigrant spirit that has allowed it to adapt and flourish in a new land. The Jewish community has always been a community of scholars and thinkers, and it is this intellectual tradition that has allowed it to contribute to the world in so many ways. The Jewish community has always been a community of faith and hope, and it is this faith and hope that has allowed it to overcome so many challenges and to emerge as a stronger and more resilient community than ever before.

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CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

Gerald B. Bubis

Lets us begin with two premises:

1. American Jews are a voluntary community.
 - a. Within that community, whose borders are blurred, there are contending -- at times warring -- subcommunities.
 - b. The sources of sanctions and sanctification define the circumstances under which collective action -- when the subcommunities bind themselves as one -- is possible.
 - c. The shibboleth "We are one" can lead to paralysis if we seek consensus among all groups prior to action.
2. Family-policy issues epitomize intracommunity tensions even as they identify areas for action by *some* of the subcommunities.

Discussions that are confined to descriptions of problems and goals have the broadest support; action-oriented, problem-solving coalitions are necessarily narrow.

Thus Jews will agree that divorce rates are rising, as are rates of abortion, homosexuality, wife and child abuse, postponed marriage, homelessness and poverty, intermarriage, and mixed marriage.

In response to these problems, the various subcommunities will agree about goals, but they will disagree strongly about strategies and tactics.

Divorce, for example, is not new among Jews. It was originally a revolutionary concept introduced by Jews to raise women from the status of chattel and to grant them legal rights.

When Reform rabbis suspended the need for the *get*, or religious divorce, feeling that a civil divorce sufficed, they were no less concerned about the sanctity of marriage than Orthodox rabbis. They were responding to *their* commitment to the equal status of women in the divorce process, a concept still missing in traditional Jewish circles.

Conservative Jewish men who agree prenuptially not to withhold the *get* in case of divorce are making a different response to modernity.

Similarly with varying responses to intermarriage and mixed marriage. Traditional Jews hope to stem the tide by separating themselves, physically and psychologically, from non-Jews. Moshe Feinstein suggests that a marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew is not a "real" marriage. Alex Schindler says that one's behaviors are more important in defining one's Jewishness than are the genes of one's parent. Patrilineal descent, which was the norm at one point in Jewish history and still defines some religious roles, is thus advanced as another response to the reality of intermarriage.

This prologue is meant to be cautionary. Jewish family policies may evolve under varied auspices and contend for support in places as diverse as federations and city halls, synagogues and Senate.

The "liberals" among us may conclude that tuition tax credits are undemocratic, while others may make common cause with fundamentalist Christians and Catholics on this issue.

In general, the areas for decision and action may or may not intersect. They include the following:

1. The Jewish community itself
2. Others in the voluntary sector
3. The Jewish community in conjunction with local, county, state and/or national governments
4. The Jewish community jointly with others in the voluntary sector in conjunction with various government bodies

This paper discusses the possibilities for decision and action within the Jewish community itself.

ACTION WITHIN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

As previously stated, the study, evaluation, and assessment of the societal trends identified above will attract the broadest base of support within the Jewish community. Almost all Jewish groups, for example, would support a Jewish data bank that would be accessible to scholars and others for whatever use the groups desire.

Coalition-building within the Jewish community and between Jewish and non-Jewish groups will continue to be uneven, episodic, and tailored to the ideological constraints and aspirations of the groups involved. It would be naive to underestimate the serious, tenacious, and unrelenting commitments some Jewish groups have that are inimical to the spirit of pluralism and toleration -- the hallmarks of most organizations in Jewish life.

The American Jewish Committee and others who are committed to pluralism and toleration -- indeed, who celebrate differences -- must seek out and enlist each other in formulating Jewish family policy. They must be prepared to do quiet battle within the Jewish community against the proponents of extremism, whether the religious fundamentalists or the totally hedonistic and libertarian among us.

Specifically, in the realm of family policy, I would begin at the fringe. Attempts to stop autopsies, prevent abortions, freeze the status of women by ignoring halakhically based liberalizing efforts must be fought. But so must efforts to dismantle the Jewish community's

attempts at consensually held positions which identify and try to extend Jewish core values.

This is a delicate matter. I suggest no McCarthy-like approaches, but rather rigorous and vigorous attempts to identify the issues and concerns that can engage most Jews, undeterred by the stridency of the extremists among us. Here is an appropriate procedure:

1. Convene the lay and professional heads of the twenty largest Jewish foundations. Enlist them in the process outlined below with the hope that they will support its outcomes.
2. Put into place with the cooperation of the Council of Jewish Federations, the synagogue bodies, and all other interest groups a national, regional, and local structure like that developed for the White House Conference on the Family to focus on Jewish family issues.
3. *Begin at the grass-roots level*, developing step by step an action agenda that will represent those issues or concerns about which there is agreement. Simultaneously, define the issues about which there may be disagreement -- for example, patrilineal descent, civil divorce with Jewish divorce, performance of mixed marriages by rabbis, etc. Allow for majority and minority positions. Identify those issues that can be resolved only (a) by government action, (b) in concert with government units on any level, (c) by joint action with voluntary non-Jewish groups and organizations, (d) by joint actions among Jewish groups locally, regionally, or nationally, and (e) by separate actions that may be competitive but that reflect the beliefs of different Jewish groups.
4. Encourage Jewish communal agencies, which now communicate with Jewish families only for fund-raising, to develop outreach programs under which they would communicate several times a year to inquire about the concerns and interests of those households as they relate to Jewish life. The result could be an information and referral system to help Jewish individuals and families take part in Jewish community life and to shape community agencies.
5. Central to solving problems is access to resources. Those who raise and distribute Jewish dollars must become actively involved in the process of identifying uniquely Jewish concerns, since this entails the reordering of community and organizational priorities.
6. Jewish academics, economists, social scientists, writers, and other intellectuals have not failed to deal with family issues. Rarely, however, have they been challenged as Jews to develop strategies and programs focused on Jewishly unique issues. These talents should be enlisted in the project.

THE JEWISH ISSUES

In this section, I wish to identify those issues that I consider to be specifically Jewish. In labeling them such, I do not suggest that other ethnic, social and/or religious groups

might not have similar concerns. Rather, I will list those issues that I feel (1) have particular ramifications for Jews and/or (2) that the Jewish community must deal with as Jews, over and above any actions taken by government, United Ways, or other groups.

The issues are as follows: (1) the maintenance of sectarian programming and services when the major source of funding is government; (2) the transfer of Jewish dollars across state lines to serve needy Jewish populations; (3) the provision of Jewish intensive services, which are by definition expensive, at reasonable cost; (4) the development of materials for homes, schools, camps, organizations, and synagogues designed to decelerate mixed marriage and to encourage conversions to Judaism; (5) the creation of a national Jewish research and development fund.

Maintaining Sectarian Programs

The Jewish community will soon face a philosophical and ideological issue of great consequence for its service agencies.

Government funds now underwrite some Jewish agencies more than Jewish contributors do. This is already true of Jewish homes for the aging, independent living facilities for the elderly, most Jewish family services (especially to the elderly), and Jewish legal aid services. Recently, some communities have turned to the use of tax-free municipal bonds to underwrite the building of Jewish community centers and other facilities. The law requires that all these services be open to clients regardless of race, color, creed, or national origin. A legal question in need of clarification is whether one can continue to offer sectarian services -- that is, specifically Jewish-oriented activities -- even though some clients are not Jewish.

If the "price" of accepting government dollars is the forfeiture of specifically Jewish activities, the Jewish family will lose vital nourishing and educational resources.

Transferring Jewish Dollars

There's a great paradox of Jewish life. We have been spectacularly successful in distributing funds internationally to aid Jews in need. Yet we have no comparable mechanism to deal with the consequences of mobility for Jewish family life in America.

Demographic studies have documented great population shifts in recent decades. The Jewish elderly are found in highly disproportionate numbers in what I have called the "Jewish Crescent" from Florida in the southeast, along the southernmost boundaries of the United States, and up the West Coast.

Jewish homosexuals from throughout the country tend to congregate in certain cities, San Francisco being the most obvious. Tens of thousands of Jewish students can be found clustered in colleges and universities outside of Jewish population centers.

Jewish singles and Jewish single parents are found in disproportionate numbers in certain of our communities. The same is true of Jewish intermarrieds, who often leave their hometowns for fresh starts in new places.

In many instances, there are insufficient resources in these towns and cities to meet

the demand for services. In other instances, outreach programs cannot be mounted because of insufficient funds.

New techniques are needed for tracking and serving Jews as if they were truly part of a national Jewish community. Better mechanisms for allocating funds among communities must be evolved.

In time past, with far fewer resources at our command, we were able to develop national agencies to find Jewish fathers who had deserted their families, to organize and transfer people and funds to cities better able to house the asthmatic and the tubercular. It is ironic that the wealthiest Jewish community in the history of the world seems incapable of addressing problems arising from community dispersion in truly national ways.

Jewish Intensive Services

Research has identified those experiences most likely to produce positively oriented Jews: Jewish nursery schools, Jewish camps, Jewish schools, Jewish experiential weekends, Jewish-oriented trips throughout America, Europe, and Israel have resulted in a high degree of Jewish commitment among participants. (In all instances, the word "Jewish" refers to an ambience, a total environment of experiences reflecting the calendar, teachings, values, and experiences of the Jewish people.)

These activities by their nature are expensive. They are so expensive as to assure that a significant proportion, perhaps a majority, of Jews cannot afford them.

Ironies abound in this conclusion. Never before has a Jewish community anywhere so effectively erected economic barriers to participation in Jewish communal life. The high rate of unaffiliation in this country can be explained in part by the disaffection when an average Jewish household finds that a Jewish life is out of reach.

Many scenarios must be explored. Alternative proposals must be developed to assure new ways of subventing these "Jewish intensive" experiences. One might be the issuing of bonds, backed by the Jewish community, which would underwrite these services for young families and allow paybacks later in life when the families' means might be greater.

Jewish foundations, both individually and community controlled, have assets of as much as \$3 billion. Perhaps significant percentages of their funds might be made available to underwrite the bonds and to subsidize some of these programs at a serious support level.

These and similar suggestions are not visionary or unrealistic. The issue is not resources but resourcefulness in making the needs of Jewish families and their support institutions more apparent to those who control the resources.

Developing Materials

Many organizations and institutions in Jewish life have been energetically developing materials and resources to enhance Jewish living. There are attempts to develop data banks of Jewish family programs that have proved effective. A computer network for service to Jewish living has recently been formed. Yet no comprehensive inventory of these resources exists. My own recently published book, *Saving the Jewish Family*, contains a bibliography

of 1240 articles on the Jewish family published over a 13-year period. Because of insufficient resources it was impossible to compile an inventory of books, programs, visual and recorded media, and the like.

In addition, no comprehensive analysis has been undertaken to evaluate the needs for more such material and, equally important, for effective distribution of it. The Jewish Media Service was recently dismantled for lack of support by the American Jewish community.

There is no lack of what our late, great friend Yehuda Rosenman used to call "pockets of Jewish energy." There does seem to be a lack of national Jewish will to connect these pockets into ever more synergistic networks.

Research and Development

Jewish life has many paradoxes. As already noted, we are at the peak of Jewish material well-being for a greater number of Jews than ever before in our history. Jewish multimillionaires are numerous; 30 percent of the *Forbes* 400 are Jews.

Stories of Jewish business successes abound. Many companies controlled by Jews emphasize research and development. Yet research and development are not the norm for the Jewish organizations that many of these entrepreneurs serve and support.

Many perplexing issues are in need of extensive research. Experimental programs are needed to test hypotheses, to reconfirm findings, to reaffirm the centrality of Jewish family life for the survival of Judaism.

Many others issues besides those developed in this paper must be examined: the homophilic community; single parents; the frail elderly; the well elderly; sandwich-generation support; four- and five-generation family living; euthanasia; extended health care; intergenerational relationships in mixed-married families; the growing number of unmarrieds; postponed marriages; Jewish family economics; mobility; integration of Iranian, Russian, Israeli, and South African Jews into Jewish life; preschool child care; two-income families and the impact on volunteerism; affordable housing. All these impinge upon Jews, some along with everyone else, some uniquely.

Devoting \$30 million annually to serious exploration of Jewish family issues would undoubtedly result in the resolution of some paradoxes, the solution of some problems. Can the AJC be a catalyst toward these ends?

THE FUTURE

There is every likelihood that many Jews will continue to be minimally involved in pursuing vital and active Jewish lives. Jewish community institutions will increasingly reflect this reality. Many Jewish communal institutions outside Israel will probably continue to have Jewish names and function under Jewish auspices yet minimize their Jewish purposes and services and increasingly serve non-Jews. Jews attracted to such institutions will most likely come from among the most assimilated elements of the population.

To offset this trend, the institutions that remain or become strongly committed to

Jewish purposes must seek each other out, regardless of their respective auspices. They must strengthen each other, share ideas, coordinate approaches, and conserve their abilities so as to make the most of their opportunities. Whether synagogue, community center, family service, or camp; whether rabbi, educator, or social worker -- neither their ideologies, sponsorships, nor professional differences should deter them from viewing each other as allies. Such institutions and those who staff them professionally will attract Jews who are ready to energize Jewish life. They will give to each other and gain from each other. Because they have hope in a future for Judaism, they will have dreams and aspirations for institutional Jewish life. Because they will demand the best of themselves, they will expect the best from the institutions that serve them.

The adventure of finding viable ways of human expression through Jewish paths will go on only as long as the vitality of Jews allows. Jews will continue to live as humans. A core will always live as Jews. None of us can predict the future; the most we can do is hope to affect it. The evidence is mixed as to the health of Jewish life. However, its possibility remains open and includes many positive and viable options. While many Jewish individuals have not coped well in adapting to change, few would doubt the resiliency of the Jews as a people. Jews have adjusted with extraordinary flexibility to radical environmental and geopolitical realities in the 120 generations of their existence and continue to survive as Jews.

Yes, all life is metamorphosis; so, too, are individual lives and the life of the Jewish people. Some of us come from communities that will not respond in the decades ahead. For most, however, the strength and direction of our transformations will depend on our roles in redeeming the best in ourselves and in our communities as Jews. We must listen to the sounds of history, some of which have been identified here. We, in turn, are responsible for the messages which will be written in the future.

THE FAMILY IN CRISIS

Sylvia Ann Hewlett

It's bad out there. Families are not doing well in the heartland of America. Consider the following facts:

- 24 percent of all children are growing up in poverty.
- 49 percent of all divorced fathers neither see nor support their children.
- 75 percent of all black infants are born to unwed mothers, half of them to teenagers.
- 30 percent of our teenagers leave high school without graduating, marginally literate and virtually unemployable.

America's family problems now threaten the social and economic fabric of the nation. Anyone who has looked at the data recently cannot but be impressed by the severity of the situation. To quote a 1987 report by the Committee on Economic Development, a group of 225 business leaders:

The nation cannot continue to compete and prosper in the global arena when more than one-fifth of our children live in poverty and a third grow up in ignorance. And if the nation cannot compete, it cannot lead. If we continue to squander the talents of millions of our children, America, will become a nation of limited human potential. It would be tragic if we allowed this to happen.

Impending tragedy or not, our politicians seem paralyzed. Over the past eight years public policy has actually conspired to undermine families with young children. Indeed, neglect of children has been so conspicuous during the Reagan years that Representative Barney Frank (Dem., Mass.) remarked that Ronald Reagan seems to believe that "life begins at conception and ends at birth." In the current presidential campaign the neglect continues, with none of the mainstream candidates giving these issues priority. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, although some of the candidates have paid lip service to such issues as child care and parenting leave, these issues simply "aren't at the top of their political agendas."

Despite political inaction, the logic for a concerted attack on family problems is compelling. Poverty-stricken, neglected children grow into problem-ridden youngsters who are extremely difficult to educate and absorb successfully into the work force. Not only does this increase welfare and prison charges (and it now costs \$40,000 a year to keep a

teenager in a detention center) but it seriously undermines the economic strength of our nation. The United States is moving into an era of intense international competition. In the 1990s, maintaining our domestic and international markets in the face of fierce rivalry from low-cost producers is going to become even more difficult. There seems little chance of keeping our competitive edge without increasing our rate of productivity and growth and the quality of the products we make. Both these goals are critically dependent on the caliber of our future work force, on our ability to educate and train young people. Schools should do more, but they will continue to fall short of the mark unless we strengthen families, because they cannot compensate for the tasks that burdened parents no longer perform. Forty-five percent of New York City's public-school children live below the poverty line in single-parent households, and almost 10 percent are homeless. Is it any wonder that the drop-out rate among these youngsters is greater than 50 percent!

There are two clusters of problems. The first affects the mainstream of the American population and revolves around the new tension between work and family as mothers are drawn into the paid labor force. In 1988 the vast majority of parents work. In 65 percent of two-parent families, both parents work, as do almost 70 percent of mothers raising children alone. Yet no matter how hard parents work, their efforts are often not enough to secure a decent life for their children. The survey data show that in Westchester County, one of the wealthiest in the nation, most working parents cannot afford quality day care but are forced to put together a mixture of relatives' time, neighbors' time, and paid help to provide enough child care to get through the working day. Most children in Westchester are exposed to three or four types of care during a routine week. This desperate juggling act puts children at risk and forces absenteeism on parents (when a relative or neighbor falls ill the whole house of cards can come tumbling down).

The reasons for all of this stress and attrition are simple: lower wages, higher housing and education costs, and deteriorating social supports. Family income doubled between 1947 and 1973 but has stagnated since then despite the dramatic increase in two-income families. Indeed, the 1986 median family income was \$1,500 less than in 1973 even though *almost twice as many wives were at work in 1986*. Most families are working harder for less money. In many households one well-paid smokestack job has been replaced by two marginal service jobs. Burger King simply does not pay as well as Bethlehem Steel. Families also face higher living costs. Mortgage payments now take up 29 percent of median family income, up from 17 percent in 1970, and the average annual cost of attending college takes 40.4 percent of median family income, up from 29 percent in 1970. It is not a question of greedy yuppies sending mothers to work to pay for winter vacations and mink coats. Home ownership and college educations, basic aspirations of many Americans, are becoming less accessible.

These economic pressures on parents have been exacerbated by government policies that have added to rather than lightened the load. Fifty-three percent of babies under one year of age now have mothers in the workplace but, perversely, federal funds for day care have been cut by 25 percent since 1980. Indeed, 60 percent of working women still have no right to job-protected maternity or parenting leave. Pregnant women are routinely fired; others are defined as "new hires" when they come back to work after childbirth and lose salary and seniority rights; and large numbers of three- and four-week-old babies are forced into substandard out-of-home care.

A second bundle of problems are centered on family breakdown and the abandonment of children by fathers. Today one child in four is poor, and 40 percent of all poor

Americans are children. These tragedies are closely bound up with divorce, teen pregnancies, and single-parent homes.

The rate of divorce tripled between 1960 and 1982. Indeed, couples marrying today face an even chance of divorcing. For women (and their children) divorce often entails severe economic hardship. Within a year of divorce living standards for ex-wives drop, on average, 73 percent while those of men rise 42 percent. Half of all divorced fathers fail to see their children, and three-quarters fail to comply with court-ordered child-support payments. For too many children divorce means poverty and the loss of contact with their father.

The other face of family breakdown is the growing number of unwed mothers. The statistics are appalling. There are now a million live births to unwed mothers, 40 percent of them to adolescents. Although teenage pregnancy is rising among whites, it is much more common in the black community. One out of every three black mothers is an unwed teenager, and a third of these go on to have a second child while still a teenager. As the Children's Defense Fund puts it, "Marriage is an almost forgotten institution among black teens"; in whole sections of the black community "children are being raised exclusively by very young mothers without male role models."

The consequences of teenage pregnancy are catastrophic. Many teenage mothers and their babies suffer from poor health. Two-thirds of teenage mothers drop out of school, and their lifetime earnings are less than half of those women who wait to age 20 before bearing their first child. To compound the problem, children born to teenagers achieve academically at rates below those born to adults.

Once women and children could count on men to share their earnings on a lifelong basis. Now men cannot be depended upon to play that role. Millions of men have financially deserted the women they have lived with and the children they have sired. Given the low earning power of women and the heavy burdens of being a single mother in a society with few social supports, the growth of single parenthood guarantees poverty for an increasing proportion of women and children and ensures the rapid growth of a nonearning population living miserably on welfare.

INFANT DAY CARE, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, AND FAMILY POLICY

Jay Belsky

Of the many changes American society has witnessed during the recent past, perhaps none are as pervasive in scope and consequence as those involving women's roles. It is not news that more than 50 percent of mothers with young children are employed. Nor is it news that this same so-called high figure accurately depicts the rate of employment of women with children under three years of age. It is nevertheless disheartening that we remain a society deeply divided about the wisdom and appropriateness of day care for the millions of children of these working mothers. This doubt is so pervasive that as a society we refuse to assure care of sufficient quality to enable us to have confidence in the long-term productivity of our rapidly aging population. Will the ever-increasing proportion of dependent elderly be adequately supported by generations of progeny whose future is clouded by a menacing debt and whose daily care is at the mercy of what their communities offer and what their parents can afford?

Our nation will enter the 21st century quite different in form than when it entered the 20th century. The same could be said of the second half of this century relative to the first half, or even the 1990s in comparison with the 1950s. What remains uncertain, however, is whether the social and economic progress which has characterized the past hundred years will continue into the next two and one-half decades, to say nothing of beyond. The adaptational capacity of contemporary society will no doubt resolve this enduring dilemma. If social structures can be built to serve the functions that have always existed -- such as child care -- to say nothing of dealing with those constantly being invented, then optimism is assuredly called for. If, on the other hand, new technologies serve only new functions and old functions are served only by traditional means, then grounds for questioning the inevitability of the American miracle must be confronted. All the telecommunication and biotechnical advances that can be imagined will yield uneven returns if our means of rearing children, educating students, and fostering social ties break down or simply prove inadequate.

In the early 1970s both houses of Congress succeeded in passing a comprehensive child-care bill that would have accomplished many things, not least of them being committing the government's authority and resources behind the provision of quality day care for America's supposedly most valuable resource -- its children. In the almost two decades that have passed since President Nixon vetoed the legislation, in part because of his unwillingness to promote the collectivization of childrearing, we have seen the utilization of day care in the country increase at a rate that even the vetoed legislation is not likely to have accelerated. Instead of the viable child-care system the legislation envisioned, what

we have instead is a jerry-built patchwork of arrangements in communities around the nation that leave all too many children, parents and employers uncertain about what tomorrow will bring. Rather than feeling confident about our capacity to face the cultural and technological challenges of the future, we experience doubts as to whether we have the means to compete in the world we have constructed and have no choice but to confront.

Despite the fact that women are not going back to the kitchen, if only because the economy has become too dependent upon their out-of-home labor, in some respects we seem no closer than we did 20 years ago to creating a child-care system capable of enabling our society to enter the 21st century with the confidence that we can have it both ways -- productive, satisfied women and secure, resilient children. Nevertheless, American mothers are returning to the workplace sooner and sooner after bearing their children than ever before. Twenty years ago we compiled statistics in terms of children under six years of age, so-called young children; by the early 1980s employment rates were reported in terms of women with children under three. Now we speak in terms of children under 12 months of age -- babies in their first year of life! The most recent statistics reveal that 53 percent of all mothers with infants under one year of age are in the work force; and a full three-quarters of these women are employed full-time. With a 45 percent increase in the number of mothers with infants in the work force between 1982 and 1985, it should be clear that change in the way American women are behaving, children are being raised, and families are functioning is continuing at a remarkably rapid pace.

When it comes to considering the care that infants in their first year of life receive when their mothers are employed, it is important that we recognize that those highly visible child-care centers that the public equates with the term day care account for a mere 15 percent of infant day care in America. The large majority (78%) of babies whose parents are employed receive their care in private homes, either their own or that of someone else. The collectivization of child care that Nixon's veto message hinted at has simply not come to pass. And instead of standing in the way of day care, all that his veto assured was that young families of the 1980s and 1990s would endeavor to rear their children, and supposedly the nation's future, in an environment that appears ever more hostile to children and youth. A nation supposedly committed to capitalism has not awakened to its wastage of human capital and the social and economic consequences of that wastage, not simply for this month's or this year's bottom line, but for those of 10, 20, and 30 years from now.

Some hints of the costs of this nation's child-care policies are beginning to emerge in research that has appeared since 1980. Repeatedly it has been found that children who experienced full-time nonparental care in the first year of life are most likely to appear, at the end of their first year, insecure in their attachment to their parents and, between the third and tenth years of life, more disobedient and aggressive than children whose day care was initiated after their first year.

Let me be clear that it remains uncertain whether infant day care -- as we know it and have it in this nation -- is the cause of these disquieting patterns of behavior. At this point the best we can say is that such developmental functioning is correlated with -- that is, associated with -- extensive nonparental care in the first year of life. Even though it is apparent that not every child growing up in a family that relies upon 20 or more hours of nonparental care beginning in the first year of life develops to be insecure, noncompliant and aggressive, the replicated nature of the findings gives this scientist serious cause for concern.

Because it is unknown whether infant day-care experience is a cause or just a correlate of insecurity, aggression and noncompliance, and because we know that affordable, high quality care is by no means nearly as available as it needs to be, it is totally inappropriate to conclude that only mothers can care for their infants or that day care is bad for babies. What can be concluded with a fair degree of certainty, however, is that the utilization of nonparental child care has expanded in this country and, as the devotion of resources to meet this growing demand for quality child care has not kept pace with the all-too-apparent need, that more and more children's development is being placed at risk, as is the nation's capacity to compete in the world and care for its citizens -- young and old alike.

It continues to amaze me that, as we approach November and an election that could give us a president whose administration takes us literally to the doorstep of the 21st century, little real discussion of the need to prepare ourselves for the future, particularly with respect to children and families, is to be heard. It will not do to imagine that we can go on as we have, and I for one fear that if some of the child-care and parental-leave legislation now pending in Congress does not become law within a year of the November elections, it is likely that nothing will be done for another 10 to 20 years -- and then it may well be too late.

The time has come for this nation to regard child care as an infrastructure issue and make the same kind of investment in it that we talk about making in our bridges and roads and that we initially made in these vital transportation systems. We need to recognize that, in the same way that the massive capital investment in transportation and communication systems resulted in huge capital gains that we continue even to this day to realize, investment in child care can bring with it comparable long-term benefits. To gain insight into the costs, specifically foregone opportunity costs, of not endeavoring to improve child care and increase options for families, imagine for a moment an America with the automobile but without paved roads.

The kinds of things that need to be done -- and that we have the knowledge and capability to do, if the commitment is made -- are fairly clear. First, parental-leave policies which enable one parent to remain at home with their infant in its opening months of life without fear of job loss is imperative. Second, because I suspect that few mothers want to jump back into the work force on a full-time basis within just weeks after bearing their child, and because it is only extensive day care that is implicated as a developmental risk, parents need the option to work part-time in the infant's first year with guarantees that their jobs will revert to full-time status thereafter. Finally, because neither of those options currently exists, and because even if they did many families would not be in a financial position to take advantage of them, good quality infant and toddler care needs to become more available. Developmental research has convincingly established that high-quality care in the preschool years not only does not carry any risks, but actually serves to enhance child development. Although comparable evidence in the case of day care in the first year is sorely lacking, there is good reason to believe that when care in this developmental period is of high quality there should be little reason to anticipate negative developmental outcomes.

In sum, America stands poised to welcome a new age of realism with regard to the rearing of its children and the functioning of its families. By moving ahead expeditiously to foster family strengths and enhance the quality and affordability of child care, we can bring within reach a future no less exciting and productive than that which was envisioned at the

turn of the current century. To turn away from the challenge of the 21st century, to fail to make the necessary investment in domestic concerns, concerns that are every bit as important to our national security as those which routinely are considered when this term is used, is to concur with recent historians who seem to suggest that America's time is passing. It is pleasing to know that the American Jewish Committee is cognizant of the time in which we live; I trust that our leaders' and our citizens' growing awareness will result in possibilities becoming realities.

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