1. Introduction

"Children can't wait! Children can't wait!" So rang the rallying cry of the 17,000 children's advocates gathered at the October 1989 national conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Atlanta, Georgia. "Children can't wait! Children can't wait!" The attendees were advocating an increased federal role in the provision of child care services, a major issue in then-pending congressional legislation.

But children persistently wait in American politics. Generations of children have lingered on waiting lists. For years they have lingered in supervised, but substandard child care settings and in unsupervised, informal arrangements. They continue to linger to this day. Nevertheless, the collective cries of "Children can't wait! Children can't wait!" symbolized a turning point in the national response to children's needs and foretold the unraveling of a tumultuous congressional debate that had begun years earlier.

Those cries of an awakened movement for children heralded the attention of Congress and the president. Thousands of newly recruited children's advocates across the nation rejoiced at the passage of the landmark child care legislation signed by President Bush on November 5, 1990. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (PL 101-508), with its far-reaching tax component and subchapters, the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Child Care Entitlement Grant, signified the culmination of twenty years of waiting for comprehensive child care legislation to pass through Congress and receive a presidential endorsement. The celebrated act is the product of sophisticated coalition politics, specifically three years of concerted lobbying efforts by a formidable alliance of diverse organizations known as the Alliance for Better Child Care. The passage of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG, or the Child Care Act) is an unprecedented victory for children's advocates, all the more monumental because of the heated political strife surrounding the formulation of the legislation. Although the act is acclaimed as an example of

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milestone legislation, it also is perceived as Janus–faced. Optimists find hope in the creation of a foundation from which to build future legislation; pessimists despair over the many compromises that were implemented and the constitutional issues that remain unresolved.

The Child Care Act of 1990 evolved in a markedly American fashion of incremental steps and pragmatic political decisions. The new legislation responded to a social problem that had escalated so dramatically over the past twenty years that congressional action was inevitable. The care of children while parents work had become a major issue affecting a significant majority of families with children of preschool and school age. An upsurge in the number of mothers employed outside of the home in the last twenty-five years has created a pressing need for new forms of child care arrangements. The traditional mode of care, that of the mother staying at home, is no longer typical as more mothers of young children participate in the labor force.

In 1976, women composed 40 percent of the labor force; whereas, it is projected that by the year 2000, women will compose 47 percent (Fullerton 1989, 3). Citing the Bureau of Labor Statistics 1988 report, the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families noted various trends in their report, *Children and Families: Key Trends in the 1980s* (1988). In particular, the committee recognized that the majority of American families rely on two incomes and that employed mothers are the norm:

> In March 1988, 65 percent of all women with children under 18, 73.3 percent of mothers with school-age children 6–17, 56.1 percent of mothers with preschool children, and 51.1 percent of mothers with infants under age 1 were in the labor force. The number of working mothers has increased by nearly half since 1975. (U.S. Congress, Committee on Children, Youth, and Families 1988, 4)

Although conflicting views exist, the committee concluded that the supply of child care lags far behind the demand. Too often families place their children in child care settings of poor quality because those are the only arrangements available to them (U.S. Congress, Committee on Children, Youth, and Families 1988, 17).

A Census Bureau report released in the summer of 1990 indicated that more families are utilizing child care arrangements and paying more for the services (Barringer 1990, A10). According to the report, 29 million children are in child care arrangements. There has been a 9 percent rise in the number of children under age 15 using child care since a 1987 report. The use of child care for children under the age of 5 has risen by approximately 11 percent, reaching a total of 9.1 million. In 1990, 55 percent of mothers of preschoolers worked

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outside of the home, as opposed to 35 percent in 1987. Of those preschool children in child care arrangements, 25 percent are in some type of group care. This figure represents an increased trend in the utilization of group arrangements as opposed to home-based care by relatives or others. In a ten year period the use of group care for preschoolers has risen from 13 percent to 24.4 percent (Barringer 1990, A10).

The cost of care has risen with demand. A family with an average income uses 7 percent of its income to obtain child care services. A family at or near poverty level expends more than 20 percent of its income for child care expenses (Barringer 1990, A10).

The degree to which there is an actual shortage in the supply of child care services is debated by economists and has been a pervasive point of contention throughout the discussions on child care policies (Barringer 1990; CRS 1989a, 5; Galinsky 1989; CCAC 1988; Hofferth cited in U.S. Congress, Committee on Education and Labor 1989; Rose-Ackerman 1986; Haskins 1988; Brown and Haskins 1989). The collection of accurate data on the number of available spaces in child care facilities is difficult to amass due to inaccurate reporting of utilization and widespread use of unregulated centers and family day care homes. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) estimated that 40,000 licensed centers had the capacity to serve 2.1 million children in 1986 (CRS 1989a, 5). The Children's Defense Fund and the Child Welfare League of America have reported widespread gaps in services across the country (CWLA 1988, H.R. 3660; CDF 1990h; CDF 1990k).

Those that do not recognize a crisis in the supply of child care claim that the market is operating in equilibrium. Nevertheless, even these market economists acknowledge gaps in the availability of care for specific geographic areas, certain populations, and certain types of care, such as infant, school age, the sick, and handicapped (CRS 1989a, 5, 7; Galinsky 1989, 2–3; CCAC 1988, 30–33). The Child Care Action Campaign (CCAC) noted in its policy report, *The Bottom Line* (1988), that even if the market could be considered in equilibrium there is a twofold problem. First, not every potential consumer of child care services can find available services. Second, the available care is often of poor quality. Therefore, economists do not define the market as being out of equilibrium, which is what "shortage" implies. Instead, these economists view the problem to be a lack of available funds to subsidize high quality care. Thus, consumers have the choice of dropping out of the labor force, which lowers the demand, or utilizing poor quality care, which too often is unlicensed (CCAC 1988, 30–31).[1]

While recognizing the policy implications due to ongoing economic debate and the everpresent need to collect data on the supply and demand for child care

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services, this book, nevertheless, acknowledges both a furor and panic across the nation in private households, public forums, and all facets of the media over securing child care arrangements. There is an expressed need for nontraditional care of children and great public concern over the issue of child care that, in addition to the Select Committee's Report, is evident in the published research of the National Research Council, *Who Cares for America's Children?* (NRC 1990) and the *Family Survey II: Child Care*, conducted for the Philip Morris Companies Inc. by Louis Harris and Associates (1989).

The purpose of this book is to analyze policy options for the sponsorship of institutional arrangements for the care of preschool children. *Preschool children* refers to the population of children younger than a state's compulsory age for entering the public educational system, which is customarily age 5 or 6. *Child care* is defined as the nonparental care of children during an extended period of time, but less than twenty-four hours, while their parents work or are unavailable for other reasons. Problems in the delivery of child care often are defined according to age range, in spite of the fact that the issues of all age groups are interconnected. The population of analysis for this book are 3, 4, and 5 year olds. The particular concerns of that population are addressed while recognizing the implications for the wide age range of children needing child care arrangements. Although the focus of this discussion is the 3–5-year-old population, the narrower focus does not imply that the problems of caring for 6 year olds and above, and infants and toddlers are not equally problematic.

Infant-toddler care, which spans the ages of birth through 30 to 36 months, is reviewed in relation to the 3–5-year-old age range. The multiple needs of infants and toddlers demand very special considerations that go beyond the scope of this study. The specific focus for this analysis provides a clearer conceptualization of the overall problem of designing child care services that adequately serve the developmental needs of children. Center based care arrangements for 3–5-year-old children has been more well received and supported throughout the nation, than the group care of infants and toddlers. A policy analysis of the 3–5-year-old population suggests policy directions for the infant-toddler period and school-age children.

This inquiry is premised on two important points. First, the debate over whether the expansion of child care services was "psychologically" appropriate peaked, and then resolved itself, in the mid-1980s. The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, together with the changing economic demands on families due to increases in the cost of living, provided the impetus for the influx of mothers from all social classes into the labor force. The actual need for child care services has always existed for families belonging to the lower socioeconomic classes and for single parent families. The problem of availability of

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child care services has drawn more attention in recent years than in the past because the need has reached into the ranks of middle and upper class families.

From the late 1960s until the middle of the 1980s, media and academic attention centered on the question of the *appropriateness* of "institutional care" as compared with "maternal" care. The attention of both scholars and the public eventually turned away from a preoccupation with appropriateness and focused instead on a concern over the *availability* of care. The public recognized the overwhelming practical need for care regardless of any theoretical debates. Cognizant of this expressed need for child care, scholars began examining the variables that determine the "quality" of care, realizing that the issue of "appropriateness" was supplanted by the demand for care outside of the home.[2] Mothers could no longer be presumed to be the sole caregivers.

The research for this book began after the issue of appropriateness paled, and a new debate over which formal institution should provide the needed child care services surfaced. This debate forms the second premise of the book. Outside of the theoretical discussions on the significance of maternal care, a debate has been raging for the past twenty years over the issue of sponsorship. The issue of control over a system of child care services in the United States has been controversial ever since legislation was proposed that provided for federal involvement in the provision of such services in the late 1960s. The question of *who* shall provide and administer child care programs has divided the public, as well as child care advocates, for many years.

The issue of sponsorship prolonged the debate over the provision of needed services. In 1975, Jule Sugarman, the former director of the National Head Start Program, noted:

> If you were to read what must now be close to three thousand pages of public testimony about the Comprehensive Child Development Bill, the Head Start program, and day care, I would be surprised if you found more than 50 pages that were devoted to the substance of the programs. You'll find 2,950 pages that are devoted to the question of who should run the program and who should have the power in it. (Sugarman cited in Sugarman, Martin, and Taylor 1975, 107)

Sponsorship continues to be one of the most critical issues for resolution before measures can be implemented to meet the need for more child care facilities. The former assistant executive director of the Child Welfare League of America, William Pierce, testified in 1978 on the obstacles preventing the expansion of child care services:

> Parents are afraid for their children. Religious organizations fear incursion of secular values into their young. Businesses fear the loss of a profitable industry. Community

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organizers fear the loss of a powerful organizing tool. Operators of day-care services fear the loss of programs and, thus, their jobs or their power or their profits or their income. Workers in day-care programs fear the loss of their jobs to some other more professionalized or less professionalized group, or some other union. Taxpayers fear the costs of day-care added to the already high taxes for schools. And local, county and state elected officials fear the combined reaction from all of the above. (Pierce cited in U.S. Congress, Committee on Human Resources 1978, 691)

The divisiveness of the issue of sponsorship hindered the formulation of a national policy on child care.

This book presents the position that conflict over who will deliver child care services has existed among the following five sectors of society for at least two decades: the social service system of public and private nonprofit agencies, religious organizations, corporations, for-profit enterprises, and the public schools. Furthermore, the role of the public schools in the delivery of child care services has always been of particular concern, and until the late 1980s, the unnamed nemesis in the whole debate. The unmatched weight of the schools in the arguments over sponsorship of child care has finally been recognized at the onset of the last decade of the twentieth century. In fact, the issue of who should sponsor child care services can be more succinctly broached by asking point blank whether the public schools should form the basis for an American system of child care services.

The American approach to child care is commonly referred to as a *patchwork system*, a term and concept attributed to Margaret O'Brien Steinfels (1973) who adeptly described the happenstance manner in which child care services developed in this country. This patchwork system is composed of the aforementioned sectors, each of which has a vested interest in maintaining or expanding its claim to controlling child care services. However, the problem of child care has grown in such magnitude that issues in delivery which have been festering no longer can be denied or discounted.

Each of the five sponsors of child care performs a unique role in society at large, and concomitantly provides the service with particular goals in mind, whether these goals are manifest or latent. Policy makers and taxpayers have to decide how to invest limited public resources, and choices need to be made over which sponsors to support and which to reject. The analysis that follows is intended to contribute to this policy decision and place the current federal resolution, as manifested in the Child Care and Development Block Grant of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA 1990) into a historical context.

The issue of sponsorship merits extensive examination because historically it has been so controversial and obstructive. A broad perspective was taken for research purposes, which included all of the sectors for analysis, to survey the

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entire array of child care providers and ideally contribute to a more complete picture of the debate. During the preparation of this book, Alfred Kahn and Sheila Kamerman published their important work, *Child Care: Facing the Hard Choices* (1987), which dovetails the analysis provided herein. Kahn and Kamerman recognized the same issues and provided definitive empirical information on several of the key sponsors. Additionally, as this book was being prepared for press, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences released the formidable work on current child care policies, *Who Cares for America's Children?* (1990), edited by Cheryl D. Hayes, John L. Palmer and Martha J. Zaslow.

The present analysis departs from Kahn and Kamerman in several ways, and seeks to take up the debate where they left off. First, this study is historical in nature and uses sociological theory as a framework for arriving at a policy decision. Second, Kahn and Kamerman did not directly include the special role of the church as sponsor, a role that becomes central in this analysis. Instead, they devote considerable attention to the topic of family child care services, which is not included in the present discussion, except in the context of the other five sponsors. Most important, the research for this book suggests that the role of the public schools must be compared against all other sponsors. Kahn and Kamerman's discussion supports this direction. In their conclusion, the two authors argue in favor of more school involvement in the delivery of child care. Sharon L. Kagan and Edward F. Zigler in *Early Schooling* (1987a) also suggest reframing the issues of child care delivery to engage the question of the appropriateness of the schools as prime sponsors.

Although it is encouraging that the question of whether the schools should offer universal child care services has finally come to the pinnacle of the controversy over expansion of child care services, the power of the schools has been consistently present and overshadowing throughout the last twenty years. Child care advocates faced decisions regarding the role that the schools should perform on the federal level and will face the same crossroads on the state level. The tortuous federal debate over child care services was resolved, without special deference given to the public schools, in favor of maintaining a multiple provider delivery system.

In 1987, Kahn and Kamerman demanded that *hard choices* be confronted as to how the nation would move forward in providing the care necessitated by the new social arrangements. The contents of this book document some of the choices that have been made since 1987 and the lengthy debate over choices during the past twenty years. The discussion that follows seeks to delineate the values in conflict and the implications of policy decisions. Although policy decisions on the federal level downplayed the role of the public schools, the

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history of the present debate and the history of the past debate over the sponsorship of kindergartens during the Progressive Era suggest that the potential of the public schools in delivering child care services cannot be dismissed, diminished, or negated. Schools will continue to be contenders in the delivery of early childhood programs and merit particular attention.

To arrive at a policy position regarding the appropriate relationship of the public schools and child care services, two methodological decisions were implemented. Expanding on the content and methodology of Grubb and Lazerson's works (1977; 1982), the historical significance of the previous debate over sponsorship of kindergartens during the Progressive Period was researched. Research into social movements of the past offers the opportunity to see the present from a new perspective. Historical research places current perceptions and philosophies in a more objective, analytic framework by the juxtaposition of the contemporary period with a time past, in which similar concerns were addressed within a markedly different context. By analogizing to a parallel movement, barriers or obstacles that emerge and reemerge in the American policy making process can be highlighted and analyzed.[3]

The American kindergarten is considered the first year of public schooling, although private programs also are offered for young children. Kindergarten is now recognized as a formal institution of one year duration for 5- and 6-year-old children. Our understanding of kindergarten as this one year institution is assumed as a given; yet, kindergarten as we know it today developed only after an entire period of movement and debate. Kindergartens, like today's child care centers, were implemented in piecemeal fashion under various sponsors. Analysis of current positions with respect to sponsorship of child care can be seen in a new perspective by studying this past movement. In addition to the significance of the origin of the contemporary kindergarten in the debate over the direction of current child care policy, it is equally significant that the kindergarten of today itself is at a historical juncture. School district administrators, parents, and educational professionals are debating the advantages and disadvantages of extending the kindergarten day without openly acknowledging that a primary force behind the all day kindergarten movement is the demographic need for child care arrangements (Olsen and Zigler 1989). The delivery and expansion of all day kindergarten has not emerged from a research base on the merits of all day programming because findings on all day programming are mixed (Olsen and Zigler 1989). Given this current kindergarten trend, the history of the kindergarten and child care are merging. Although the historical significance and impact of this merger is discussed later, it is important to note that a common crossroads is being faced by both services and their respective traditions.

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A form of functional analysis has been adapted from sociological theories in conjunction with the methodological approach of looking to the past for insight into the present. A functional framework is applied because of its heuristic value in clarifying the consequences of the different policy options. Although the arguments are presented within a functionalist perspective, conflict theory underlies the discourse.

Conflict theory (Dahrendorf 1959; 1962; 1968; Eitzen 1986; Horton and Hunt 1984; Turner 1982) examines ideological value systems held by different interest groups and recognizes the incompatibility of certain institutional claims in society. The many divisions in society by class, race, gender, organizational hierarchies, and occupation promote differing ideologies, which are at odds. Conflict theorists acknowledge that the values of the most powerful groups in society predominate over other value systems and ideologies and form mass rationalizations. The value systems and ideologies of the most influential social members define and dictate policies.

Conflict theory and functionalism are built on different premises (Turner 1982; Eitzen 1986; Horton and Hunt 1984). Functionalists assume that society is in a state of equilibrium with designated members and institutions contributing to the maintenance of the stable condition by performing particular functions. An emphasis is placed on forming consensus among factions of society. Functionalists focus on the maintenance of the status quo or the desired state of equilibrium and view change as dysfunctional, functional, or nonfunctional to the operation of society (Horton and Hunt 1984).

Conflict theory places emphasis on an underlying power struggle among interest groups and classes, rather than on a functional need for harmony. Conflict theorists view change as the outgrowth of negotiations and accommodations among interest groups (Horton and Hunt 1984). Ongoing tension is seen as the given structure of social relations. Social problems and work-related problems are resolved through a cyclical process of conflict and temporary resolutions.

This book is written from a perspective that acknowledges child care as a multifunctional service dependent upon the institution that sponsors it. The questions posed are based in the foundation of conflict theory because the fabric of the status quo is brought into question. Moving beyond the functionalist description of normative functions, conflict theorists probe the consequences of structure-function relations (Horton and Hunt 1984, 17). This analysis of the manner in which our society deals with the problem of caring for its youngest members specifically asks the following questions: To whom is the service of child care functional? What function does child care perform under various auspices? How does the institution's function in society affect the function of

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child care? What are the ramifications of different policy directions regarding sponsorship of child care services? The discussion proceeds from the conflict theory perspective on the assumption that myriad interest groups have battled unremittingly over turf in the quest for delivering, and thereby, controlling child care services.

A historical analysis shows that child care has functioned in the interests of certain groups, as did the kindergarten of the past. The questions of this analysis build from a conflict perspective because the conflict between interest groups is pronounced and will become evident in the discussion. To arrive at answers, Robert Merton's (1968; 1976; 1978) functional framework has been adapted. Merton's framework in conjunction with the social policy theorist Yelaja's (1978) have been selected after a close study of the literature on child care. The issues in need of resolution call forth the aforementioned questions, which naturally fall into the functional framework. The question of sponsorship suggests multiple options with diverse consequences. The functional framework teases out the advantages and disadvantages of specific policies.

In his review of functionalism, Jonathan H. Turner (1982, 100–102) acknowledges four different forms of the theory. Turner describes Robert Merton's version as "net functional balance" functionalism (p. 101). Merton broke away from Talcott Parsons's grand theorizing and concentrated on theories of a middle range. He was particularly interested in the relation of parts of a system to the whole system and each other.

To develop theory and test functional concepts, Merton advocated examining an empirical system. By examining the empirical, alternative possibilities regarding the items under analysis become more visible. Merton introduced the concepts functional and dysfunctional and identified manifest and latent functions:

> First, items may be not only positively functional for a system or another system item, but also dysfunctional for either particular items or the systemic whole. Second, some consequences, whether functional or dysfunctional, are intended and recognized by system incumbents and are thus *manifest*, whereas other consequences are not intended or recognized and are therefore *latent*. (Turner 1982, 73)

As with most modes of inquiry, functionalism has been subjected to much criticism. However, the theory has been applied in the field of social policy development in a pragmatic way (Yelaja 1978, 16). In the essay "What Is Social Policy? Its Assumptions, Definitions and Uses," Shankar A. Yelaja emphasizes the importance of Merton's functional analysis for social policy development. Yelaja distills three important questions from functionalism for use in social policy analysis: "What structures are involved?" "What functions have

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resulted?" "What functions take place in terms of given structures?" Furthermore, he clarifies the terms *function* and *structure*: "The term 'function' is any condition, any state of affairs, resultant from the operation of a structure, and the term 'structure' is a pattern, i.e., an observable uniformity in terms of which action takes place" (Yelaja 1978, 16–17).

For the purposes of this book, the goals or intended outcomes as well as the actual outcomes of child care will be viewed as the "functions." The "structure" is seen as an empirical, or existing, institution through which the functions are pursued: the social service system composed of public and private nonprofit agencies; the public school system; industry; for-profit organizations; and religious organizations.

The literature on child care has recognized the multifunctional aspect of the service; and, it is exactly this multifunctional aspect that ignites the controversy surrounding sponsorship. Writers in the field of child care policy have categorized the functions of child care in diverse, but similar ways. Several theorists have discussed child care in terms of three functions expressed as the social service, the economic, and the educational (Mahoney 1985; Gray 1980; Steinfels 1973; Murray 1985). Gray (1980) and Steinfels (1973) have provided a history to these functions by tracing the development of child care services in the United States. Gray built on Steinfels's earlier work and illustrated how different functions became tied to specific structures.

Other commentators have described child care with a dichotomous functional perspective (Almy 1982; Caldwell 1986; 1989b; Fishhaut and Pastor 1977; Greenman 1978; Grubb 1987, 23–33; Kagan 1987, 10–12; 1989a; 1989b; Morgan 1989; Shanker 1987).[4] This dual functional framework reflects the public's perception of the service and defines child care in relation to the education profession. These dichotomous views discuss child care services in two contexts. On the one hand, child care is viewed as performing a "custodial care" function that contrasts with an "educational" function. This custodial care function is attributed to the social work heritage of child care services and implies a service that acts as a mere time-filler for children while their parents are at work. When seen in this light, a stigma is attached to the service in contrast to the "educational" function that implies that children's cognitive needs are addressed.

In another context, the *custodial* emphasis is disregarded and the *care* aspect of the service is highlighted. *Care* is then equated with the favorable activity of meeting the socioemotional needs of children. This idealized view of child care services contrasts with an unfavorable image of the education function, which stresses cognitive development at the expense of affective development. The "caring" function rather than the "education" function has been linked with a

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"developmental" perspective or the teachings of child psychology; whereas, the education function has been linked to pedagogical thinking.

Kagan (1989b) purports that a shift in this dichotomous paradigm is underway. Caldwell (1989b) argues that the dual images of child care be discarded in favor of a unitary vision of the service as "educare." This book breaks away from the perspectives that define child care in terms of two or three functions by suggesting that the service performs at least nine functions. The discussion that immediately follows will define these functions and describe their history, significance, and interrelatedness.

In "The Social Work Profession and Day Care Services: Social Policy Issues, 1890 to 1990" (1980), Gray discusses functions in terms of goals or strategies. The first goal of child care, as seen by Gray, is a social service strategy. In this context child care is meeting residual needs in society and is tied to the social welfare profession and system. Child care is seen as a service for low-income families. It serves the function of enabling poor mothers to work and, thereby, reduces the welfare rolls. For the purposes of the discussion in this book, this first function will be referred to as the *welfare reform* function of child care. Senator Russell B. Long advocated this function by supporting the Child Care Services Act of 1971. As chairman of the Committee on Finance, Long argued that "adequate provision for the availability of child care is a key element of any attempt to reform the welfare system" (Long quoted in U.S. Congress, Committee on Finance 1971, 4). In contrast to Senator Long, Arlyce Currie, a member of an information and referral program for child care centers in California, commonly referred to as *Bananas*, testified in 1977 at the *Child Care and Child Development Programs* Hearings as follows:

> It is all too clear that the job of child caring or that children per se are not what is valued or even why child care is subsidized at all; the political rationale of subsidizing child care seems to be that welfare costs society too much and by some mysterious means we will wipe out welfare by paying for the care of some of the children in the lowest economic - strata. (U.S. Congress, Committee on Human Resources 1977–78, 157)

This welfare reform function is associated with another function child care has served within the welfare system, which shall be referred to as the *social service* function. It meets the needs of the low income user by providing "welfare" or "relief" services. This function's history is tied to the professionalization of social work and a focus on increasing the self-sufficiency of low-income people and preserving the family unit.

The social service function has a long history that ties child care to welfare sponsorship. The early development of child care centers in the United States

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dates back to the mid-1800s with proliferation beginning in the 1890s (Steinfels 1973; Gray 1980). These early child care centers were called *day nurseries* and modeled after the French creche (Steinfels 1973, 37).

Steinfels's description of the day nursery movement suggests three distinct periods. The earliest period involved the formation and establishment of the service. A second stage, during the Progressive Era, was marked by the social work profession's efforts to institutionalize and formalize the service, while social workers themselves strived for professionalization. Steinfels classifies a third modern period when the service is in demand by more families as a result of demographic changes and the women's movement. The decades in the second period, between 1930 and 1973, are significant for two reasons. First, the operation of the day nurseries remained stable by servicing a targeted population that was not prone to demographic fluctuation. Second, the "day nursery," later to be recognized as "day care" and then "child care,"[5] became stigmatized and classified as a "custodial" service, despite its social service function that focused on family needs. The custodial connotation reflected the link with the welfare system, which carried its own stigma in society, as a service system for those that could not manage on their own.

Steinfels's and Gray's reviews of child care's early history support the position that the service has served multiple functions and sponsors. "The two most important forces behind the expansion of child care during the turn of the century were leaders from the charity organization movement as well as the settlement house movement" (Gray 1980, 3). The charity organizations applied the new concept of scientific charity, by which the recipients of charity were investigated and scrutinized to see if they were worthy of receiving support. The goal of the movement was to encourage self-sufficiency (Gray 1980, 3).

This new scientific approach to giving charity, however, categorized people into the deserving and the undeserving. With regard to child care, mothers were screened to determine whether their need for the service was legitimate. Child care was allowing poor women to go to work by providing care for their children. The mothers entitled to use the service were those willing to work, many of whom were widowed or deserted by their spouses. The charity organizations did not provide charitable services to families in which the causal factor for their poverty was the husband's "poor conduct": that is, lack of employment or alcoholism (Gray 1980, 4). Poor women and their families sustained scrutiny to determine their worthiness as recipients for support, a procedure spared their better-off counterparts. A two-tiered sorting system originated that, as a consequence, helped define the social status of those who utilized day nurseries as "welfare recipients." This *social status* function will be explicated further later in the discussion.

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Child care's social service and welfare reform functions in the Progressive Period consequently provided an alternative to the institutionalization of children, a social strategy practiced in the previous decade. Reformers during the 1800s had solved social problems by separating children from their parents by building institutions for their residential care or by placing poverty stricken urban children with foster families in rural areas (Gray 1980, 4; Steinfels 1973, 40, 50). The day nursery was perceived as a means of preserving the family unit, which was a social goal in resurgence during the period between 1919–1930.[6]

While charity organizations practiced scientific charity which focused on individual ability and character, settlement house workers of the Progressive Era adopted an environmental perspective. Within the ongoing nature-nurture debate, they emphasized the significance of environmental influence on individual and social problems. Settlement house workers acknowledged a normative need for two worker families in an era of increased industrialization, urbanization, and immigration (Gray 1980, 5).

Leaders of the settlement movement provided day nursery services without investigating the character of the mother and the family. Nevertheless, the traditional functions of the day nursery remained: (1) to enable a mother to work, and thereby assure her independence from "relief"; and (2) to preserve the family unit. These day nurseries also provided the "social service" function by offering additional services that included emergency night care; visiting nursing care; instruction in cooking, sewing, English, and child rearing; and after school care for older children (Steinfels 1973, 42). The day nursery became one service among many for this lower class population.

In addition to the social service function, the preservation of the family function, and the enabling of women to work function (which in essence is an *economic* and welfare reform function), the day nursery movement rebuffed criticisms that it merely provided custodial care by acknowledging two other purposes: "character building" and "prevention." Children were seen as being better off in the day nursery setting than in tenement houses, even if their mothers were present in the home. The day nursery advocates argued that day nursery experience prevented future relief problems (Steinfels 1973, 50–51). These last two purposes are echoed in today's literature on the social and economic benefits of early childhood education and give credence to the welfare reform function. The research on early childhood programs for the disadvantaged indicates that "early intervention" prevents or retards school-related problems, as well as juvenile delinquency and future welfare dependency (Berruta-Clement et al. 1984).

The child saving attitude that developed the early day nurseries changed with the professionalization of social work (Steinfels 1973, 59; Gray 1980, 8).

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Day nurseries were scrutinized in a retrenching of the social work profession after the first World War. The function of the nurseries was questioned by those in the welfare field. Analysts debated the function in terms of the clientele and admission policies:

> What standards of admission should the day nursery adopt? The answer depended, of course, on prior assumptions about what the day nursery was. If the day nursery was primarily a service for working mothers, then the standards of admission were clear: the day nursery accepted children whose mothers worked. If, on the other hand, the day nursery was a social welfare agency, then the standards of admission were somewhat more complicated. (Steinfels 1973, 60–61)

At the 1919 National Conference of Social Work, Grace Caldwell of the New England Center of Day Nurseries answered this debate over the function of day nurseries. Her speech set a specific course and image for child care that remains today. "Miss Caldwell's speech in 1919 marked the beginning of a long process of change in the day nursery, from a useful, broadly defined, simple child helping service to a marginal and limited agent of social welfare" (Steinfels 1973, 62–63). Caldwell's speech included much social work terminology: "maladjustment," "temporary expedients," "problem families," "correct social diagnosis," "social evil and the larger picture" (Steinfels 1973, 61).

Caldwell defined the day nursery in three ways. First, the day nursery served to adjust the maladjusted family. Second, the day nursery functioned only as an expedient; it served as a stopgap alternative to home care. The child's true place was in the home with a nonworking mother. Third, day nurseries were seen as functioning to undermine the wages of men and therefore posed an economic threat in certain communities. The nurseries were seen as an expedient means of solving a temporary problem and limited to a population that had particular troubles (Steinfels 1973, 61).

A pathological taint was placed on child care when it became a specific branch of the social welfare profession. Linking the sponsorship of the welfare system and the function of serving the needs of "maladjusted" families has had important ramifications in the overall development of the child care system in the United States. From this brief historical sketch, it is evident that structure and function have had a symbiotic relationship. The "welfare reform" function and the "social service" function traditionally have been tied to sponsorship by the welfare profession. In addition to these two manifest functions, day nurseries operated according to the ideology of the times as an alternative to institutionalization and a preserver of the family unit. Furthermore, as will be discussed later, the day nurseries functioned as a socializing institution.

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The third manifest function that child care serves is *educational*. It is a service that when so designed, can meet the developing intellectual needs of children. This functional aspect of the service links child care to the education profession. A significant body of research indicates that the first five years of life are the formative period in human development, an antecedent to all later experiences, and provide the crucial foundation for future satisfaction in life. Given this body of knowledge, by servicing the under-six population, child care centers have an important role in meeting the developmental needs of their charges.

Government involvement in the early education of the young began in the 1960s with Project Head Start. Head Start is a prototype early intervention program aimed at the underprivileged population of 3 to 5 year olds. It functions as a compensatory educational program; research on the success of Head Start supports the importance of this early educational experience for disadvantaged youngsters (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1985; Schorr 1988, 184–200).[7] The positive results of Head Start, the general research on the importance of the early years, and the growing body of literature on high quality early childhood programs suggest that the child care experience should be as enriching as possible. This enrichment-educational approach contrasts with the custodial approach to child care that developed under the early sponsors of the day nurseries and the welfare system (Steinfels 1973).

The educational function of child care builds from a theory base that was not used by the charity and settlement house workers. Although some day nurseries did offer enriched educational programs, the primary concern of most nurseries was custodial (Steinfels 1973, 37, 52). The history of early educational programs is rooted in the kindergarten movement between 1860–1930 and the nursery school movement during the 1920s. Some day nurseries incorporated ideas from these movements (Steinfels 1973, 46–48). However, the kindergarten and nursery school movements grounded themselves in the education profession, not the social work profession.

The significance of the educational function of child care is that educators claim a sponsorship interest, and the service is seen as universal, rather than selective. Education is recognized as a service for the general public. It is not seen as a service for a "relief" population.

The historical debate over admissions policy surfaces again with the entree of the education profession. Rather than being debated solely within the welfare system as was true in 1919, the issue at this point is debated between systems. Is child care primarily a service for children of working mothers? How should welfare dependent mothers be served? Should child care be a universal service for all children because of its enriching potential? And, should child care

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function in the social welfare mold of being a custodial service, or should child care deliver high quality early childhood education? The answers to these questions will depend on the sponsoring institution and the amount of funding provided.[8]

The fourth function or role that child care has played is that of "*liberator*," from here on referred to as the *liberation-universalization* function. The 1960s gave rise to this vision of child care when feminists envisioned the service as a means of liberation for women (Gray 1980, 15). Through the use of child care services, mothers would be able to voluntarily take leave of their children to pursue other goals. Viewed in this light, child care should be readily available to anyone who desires to use the service. In essence, child care would function as a social utility, universally available to all women and families. When remarking on the celebrated passage of the Act for Better Child Care in the Senate on June 23, 1990, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell eloquently articulated one interpretation of this function:

> This is an important day for the Senate, for American families, for American children. But I think, most important, for American women.
>
> This is titled "a child care bill," and indeed it is. But I believe a central issue, running through this legislation and this national concern is equal economic opportunity. The scarcity, in some areas the total absence of decent, affordable, safe child-care facilities has deprived millions of American women of their equal economic opportunity.
>
> They have been forced to make a painful choice between the economic imperative of working to supplement their families income and the anxiety of concern for their children's health, safety and well-being. And until the day that our society makes child care readily available, readily affordable in safe and secure settings for all American women, we will not have achieved our ideal of equal opportunity for all Americans. (U.S. Congress, *Report on Act for Better Child Care* 1989, S 7478)

Feminists have been divided in their view of child care over the past twenty years. Radical feminists envision child care in a more utopian fashion than their liberal cohorts, who see child care in a more pragmatic and realistic light. Writing in an issue of *Social Policy,* Katherine Ellis and Rosalind Petchesky (1972–1973) attacked the alleged bourgeois functions of child care, and highlighted more revolutionary functions:

> . . . Work equality for all women would be impossible without the provision of socialized child care facilities. Thus child care is a crucial plank in the strategy for women's liberation. Child care struggles are crucial, moreover, as a means of raising consciousness about the traditional family and its reinforcement of sex-role stereotypes; about the

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socializing functions of educational institutions at all levels of capitalist society; and about the possibility of freer, more social childrearing alternatives. (p. 19)

Ellis and Petchesky recognized that these idealized functions of child care cannot be achieved unless a movement supporting such functions develops. They wrote:

We envisage day care centers that (1) actively support the restructuring of men's work to allow their participation in child care struggles and programs; (2) attempt to establish cooperative, nonhierarchical relationships among staff (through, for example, abolishing ranks and pay scales); and (3) give priority to the socialization of children in terms of cooperative, nonauthoriatian, antiracist, and antisexist values. (Ellis and Petchesky 1972–3, 22)

Less radical feminists, as represented by the National Organization for Women (NOW), supported the expansion of child care services and viewed the service as a basic right for all citizens, rather than as a public welfare service. (NOW prepared statement cited in Committee on Labor and Public Welfare 1971, 754). Jan Calderon Yocum, the executive director of the Day Care Council of America in 1981, expressed the public utility function of child care most succinctly:

Child care should be part of our public utilities, the things that are necessary for people to be able to function—child care is not a "social service"—those are for deficit or pathological families or individuals. Day care is a need of normal, healthy families. . . . Americans must be educated to the fact that child care is something we must provide and pay for, like gas and lights. (Yocum cited in Davis 1981, 71)

These two voices within the women's movement remain disconnected in the movement for child care. This lack of unity within the feminist community, coupled with the social and economic stratification evident among today's women, places feminists in a vulnerable position for receiving criticism about their lack of mobilization on the issue of child care. A review of the literature on child care in both the popular and scholarly press indicates a lack of adequate interest and vociferousness over this major social problem by feminists. Child care is becoming a more prominent platform for women's groups only as more of the middle and upper classes are themselves affected by the unavailability of care and the problems of bridging work and family. Feminists have been preoccupied with the issues of abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment (Bowe 1986, 299).[9] Betty Friedan's book *The Second Stage* (1981) and Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung's *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the*

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Revolution at Home (1989) address some of the weaknesses in the feminist's past and present platforms regarding the problem of child care.

Returning to the two perspectives that prevail among those feminists who *have* addressed the plight of children and the crisis over balancing work and family, Spakes (1989) highlights an underlying contradiction. According to Spakes "liberal" feminists acknowledge the special maternal function of women; whereas, "radical" feminists only recognize the reproductive abilities as the line of demarcation between the sexes. From Spakes's viewpoint, current policy agendas that are referred to as *pro-family* seek to support the family, but simultaneously perpetuate a pronatalist philosophy that contradicts and undermines the equality of the sexes philosophy of radical feminists. Pronatalistic thinking ties women to traditional familial boundaries. Spakes would like to push the debate into a new territory by emphasizing the elements of a patriarchal society that prevent progress in equalizing the status and potential of the sexes.

Barbara Levy Simon (1988) links this patriarchal society with capitalism. Socialist feminists view "capitalism and patriarchy as interdependent and reciprocal systems that conjointly keep women in a secondary position" (p. 65). Socialist feminists seek an increase in the accessibility of services and a reduction of capitalism's damage, especially to countries and women in the Third World (Simon 1988, 65). Progressive thinking feminists strive to develop short- and long-term goals. Short-term goals address the immediate problems of women, such as the problems created by working and mothering. Long-term goals focus on changing the patriarchal system of female dependency and the irresponsibility of this patriarchy that permits women to assume the primary responsibility for child rearing (Spakes 1989).

The issues surrounding child care are very much intertwined with feminist theory because of traditionally held views about the mother-child bond, the glorification of the mother role, and the gender stratification of occupations. Child care is not only problematic from the consumer side, but is a grave concern from the perspective of child care workers and providers. The majority of child care workers are women and their work is grossly undervalued in economic and social status terms. Ninety-seven percent of child care workers are women according to a national survey of 227 centers in five metropolitan areas (Child Care Employee Project 1989, 8). The implicit and explicit relationship between caregivers and parents may be seen in some contexts as exploitive and fallacious. In her important article, "Women as Fathers: Motherhood and Child Care Under a Modified Patriarchy," Barbara Katz Rothman (1989) calls to task the assumptions on which contemporary child care arrangements are based:

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We hire baby-sitters, day-care workers, nannies, housekeepers, to "watch" our children. The tasks are the traditional tasks of mothering—feeding, tending, caring, the whole bundle of social and psychological and physical tasks involved in the care of young children. When performed by mothers, we call them mothering. When performed by fathers, we have sometimes called it fathering, sometimes parenting, sometimes helping the mother. When performed by hired hands, we called it unskilled.

We devalue these nurturing tasks when we contract for them. When we do them ourselves because we want to do them, we see them as precious, as special, as treasured moments in life. That is the contradiction that allows us to value the children so highly, to value our special time with them, to speak lovingly of the child's trust, the joys of that small hand placed in ours—and hire someone to take that hand, at minimum wage. (Rothman 1989, 97)

Given this tacit social arrangement, child care performs a *social status* function, which was seen earlier in the era of the day nurseries when mothers were determined "deserving" or "undeserving." The social status function maintains a social strata among women. Contrary to its idealized function as an agent of liberation and social change, child care often upholds the status quo by enabling some workers to advance up the economic ladder at the expense of their coworkers' low pay. This should be a unifying issue for feminists and socialists. Upwardly mobile mothers have the power to utilize the service for their own advancement while paying the caregivers of their children low wages. This wage differential, however, does vary across the range of classes. Often the child care user is only slightly higher on the economic scale than the center child care worker. Upper class parents tend not to rely on child care centers to the same degree as middle and lower class parents, but employ private caregivers.[10]

This social status function maintains the social strata in most cases, but simultaneously advances the status of certain subgroups of women up the wage scale. In other words, child care has benefited some women at the expense of others on two levels. First, upper class and upper middle class women advance by suppressing the wages of their children's caregivers.[11] Second, access to employment varies by region and corporate employer. Some lower income and minority women have entered the job market because of the combined availability of child care services and employer need. This combination of factors in the market economy indicates that the social status function of child care is neutral, depending on the context of its use. Whether functioning as a sorter for social status or as a liberating service universally accessible, child care's multiple functions in society call forth feminist dilemmas.

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