Old Coverage

*

Selected Media Reprints Related to IAV, 1986 – 1991

IAV / 1841 Broadway, Suite 211 / New York, NY 10023

212.246.3942 / www.americanvalues.org

Citizen Action eyes election

PITTSBURGH, PA—The Citizen Action network, with 22 state affiliates, has traditionally been a loose confederation of organizations sharing common agendas in their home states but no national program. That's been gradually changing, and this election year has accelerated the process.

Its leadership conference in Pittsburgh the last weekend in July, co-sponsored by its training institute, Midwest Academy, highlighted the group's plans for an electoral offensive to defeat Ronald Reagan and elect left and liberal candidates to national, state and local office. Citizen Action will work for seven U.S. Senate candidates, 44 House hopefuls, 54 state and local officeseekers, and is sponsoring a voter registration effort to register 750,000 new voters.

To date, Citizen Action has had little national recognition. Some of the stronger state organizations, such as the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, California's Campaign for Economic Democracy and the Illinois Public Action Council, have attracted notice. Through its Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition, it mobilized enough grassroots opposition to help kill Reagan's proposal to decontrol natural gas (a rare and unexpected defeat for the administration), which in turn prompted Mobil Oil to excorciate the organization in several of its "public service" Op-Ed advertisements. Earlier this year, Citizen Action began a National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards, and already a significant strengthening of national Superfund legislation appears within its political reach.

But electoral work will demand most of the network's national energy this year, absorbing much of its combined $1.8 million budget and 1.5 million members. A door-to-door canvass in 300 congressional districts is pitching both the Citizen Action agenda as well as its chosen candidates.

The electoral emphasis is only part of a deeper organizational change. Formed in 1979 as a coalition of autonomous state organizations, in the last year the network's localism—in politics and in money—has yielded to greater central control and national focus. National Board and staff members speak of much that remains to be done; Citizen Action, in national terms, is still in its nascency. But the consolidation to date has been dramatic, and the future direction clear.

Both of these changes—going electoral and going national—are in large measure a response to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Among the many changes that Reagan has wrought, the left can thank him for at least these: he has pushed hundreds of disparate local organizing efforts into national politics, and he has taught them that elections are a necessary arena for political activity. Citizen Action is a striking example of this new type of organization: national, yet rooted in local communities, and combining elections with the more traditional tactics of protest and direct action.

At least some people see clearly what is happening. Listen to the Heritage Foundation, think tank of the New Right. They recently discovered the "Hidden Agenda, Hidden Danger" in Citizen Action: it had "succeeded where others have failed" to offer community groups "a path to mainstream power."

—David Blankenhorn

New Republic October 29, 1984

CORRESPONDENCE

SKEWED SKERRY

To the editors:

Peter Skerry cannot understand why the White House's determination to "defund the left" does not stop with "New Left types" with "roots in 1960s radicalism," but extends even to the Industrial Areas Foundation ("Vendetta in the Valley," TNR, September 17 & 24). I think Reagan's people grasp the political realities better than Skerry does. Each of the major community organizing efforts in the country—I.A.F., Citizen Action, ACORN, National People's Action, and others—threaten Reagan for the same reasons: they seek to empower the poor, specifically by registering poor people to vote. Rather than criticize all organizers except the I.A.F., Skerry should take the time to find out something about them. By emphasizing what divides organizers, not what unites them, he indulges in a sectarianism that distorts an otherwise excellent analysis.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
New York, New York

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 1986

Family Values, Without Sugary Pieties

By David Blankenhorn

The family is likely to become one of the central issues of the 1986 and 1988 political campaigns. Family concerns and family values cut across ideological lines and involve millions of Americans in ways that most issues simply do not. But while any public figure with an ounce of sense ought now to be staking a claim to this subject, most will content themselves with the same sugary pieties about the sanctity of family life.

There's an opportunity out there for serious politicians who wish to define family issues in meaningful terms and offer a program for addressing them. And so far neither left nor right has seized the initiative.

Such a program must recognize three fundamental social facts.

The first is that the percentage of women in the labor force will soon roughly equal that of men. Already, nearly 70 percent of mothers with school-age children work outside the home as well as in it — surely the greatest shift in American family life during this century.

The second fact is that real family income, after having doubled from 1947 through 1973, has stagnated for the past 12 years and was lower in 1984 (the last year for which data are available) than in 1973. In particular, the median income of younger families has dropped 8 percent since 1973. Baby-boomers now face acute pressures at key moments in family life, such as buying a first home or having a child.

The third fact is the growing link between family breakdown and poverty. Today, one child in four in America is poor and 40 percent of all poor Americans are children — a tragedy closely bound up with teen pregnancies and single-parent homes.

The New Right began to coalesce under the pro-family banner in the late 1970's, prompted in part by what they perceived as Government interference in family life by the Carter Administration. And since President Reagan uses family imagery to decorate nearly every proposal, most conservatives consider the family their sole political property.

Yet a strand of hypocrisy runs through the conservative position. In last year's House battle over tax reform, for example, New Right "pro-family" forces in and out of Congress fought and nearly killed the very bill that offered the most tax relief for the average family. Why? Because, they said, the bill was "anti-business": It paid for family tax cuts by closing corporate loopholes. While trumpeting family values, these conservatives yearn even more for capital formation.

Or take Mr. Reagan's recent State of the Union pledge to reform the welfare system. No matter how often he invoked family themes in that address, does anyone doubt that the Administration's interest in this crucial family issue pretty much begins and ends with a fervent desire to cut spending?

Of course, there are some conservative activists such as Paul Weyrich and Phyllis Shlafly who really believe what they say about families. The problem is what they believe. For example, they oppose any initiative to help working mothers, such as child-care tax credits or day-care programs, because at bottom they oppose the very idea of women entering the labor force. They seek nothing less than repeal of the last 30 years of new opportunities for women.

As conservatives put their own special spin on the family debate, progressives seem ambivalent and defensive. Aside from some rhetoric about family verities — little different from right-wing boiler plate — progressives have hardly begun to offer new initiatives to strengthen the family. Many seem almost resigned to remaining in the "anti-family" box their opponents have put them in.

An issue that can challenge progressives

Yet family issues offer progressives perhaps their best chance to redefine the national debate on social policy. They could start with three ideas.

First, help working parents to be better parents. The workplace has yet to adjust to the changing family. Through public and private initiatives, we should extend flexible work hours and benefits packages, increase maternity and paternity leaves and establish on-site child-care facilities. Such efforts would allow parents more time with their children and offer them greater freedom to balance the demands of family and work.

Second, institute pro-family tax reform. Individual rates should be lowered, and the code should start treating children as investments by significantly increasing the amount allowed for child exemptions. Credits for child care should be raised. The so-called marriage penalty must be eliminated. Poor families should be removed from the tax rolls. Many of these provisions are contained in the recently passed House bill but face stiff Senate opposition. Conservatives must choose: side with pro-family reform or with corporate loopholes.

Third, recognize children in poverty as the nation's greatest moral challenge. We should invest more, not less, in nutrition, health care and education for poor children. Moral leadership and new public-private ventures are necessary to reduce teen-age pregnancies and sexual irresponsibility. Failed welfare programs should be converted as much as possible into education and job-training programs.

The family debate offers a compelling organizing principle for social policy. It is a theme that unites an otherwise disparate array of issues and policy options. It should be perfect for politically beleaguered progressives, who often seem incapable of conveying a moral message that binds policy ideas into a larger vision. □

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public-policy organization conducting a research project on family issues.

3/23/86

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 1986

The Shrinking Deductibility Value of Children

To the Editor:

David Blankenhorn didn't check with me before he presumed to state my views in his Op-Ed piece on family values (March 23). Maybe that's why he stated them falsely.

The centerpiece in our proposals to help the family economically is President Reagan's proposal to raise the income-tax exemption for taxpayers, spouses and each child from $1,000 to $2,000 a year. This is the best, most cost-efficient and fairest way to help all children.

The Democratic majority in the House of Representatives not only refused to allow this $2,000 exemption for all children, but also rigged the House rules in order to prevent a floor vote on this key issue. We opposed the House bill because this central pro-family feature was taken out by the Democrat-controlled Ways and Means Committee.

Our opposition to the House bill had nothing to do with its corporate provisions one way or the other. We opposed the way the House refused to allow a vote on the $2,000 exemption, and we also opposed the way in which the Ways and Means Committee tried to slip over on the American people a convoluted compromise in which children would be valued differently depending on whether their parents are homeowners or not.

The liberal approach to family finances is to keep taxes high and then allocate credits, deductions, loopholes, benefits and handouts to the particular segments of society that the liberals favor (of course, after paying an army of bureaucrats and social-service professionals along the way). The conservative approach is to let families spend their own money.

If children were to have the same value in the income-tax code that they had 35 years ago, the exemption would be $5,500 a child per year. Under the liberal big-spending fiscal policies, the value of a child has been reduced by three-fourths over the last 35 years.

This injustice cries out for a remedy, and conservatives will continue to work hard to achieve this pro-family remedy.

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Alton, Ill., March 24, 1986

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 1986

Progressives at Work On Helping Families

To the Editor:

David Blankenhorn is right when he implies that demographics should drive social policy ("Family Values, Without Sugary Pieties," Op-Ed, March 23). He is wrong, however, to say that progressives have left the helm of the family debate to conservatives.

Over the last several years we have passed legislation establishing flexible work time and work-sharing options for Federal workers. We have led the debate for better, more available child care. And now we have introduced legislation calling for a national parental and medical leave policy for working men and women.

This new legislation, the parental and medical leave bill of 1986, would allow parents to take up to 18 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to care for their newborn, newly adopted or seriously ill children. It would also provide seriously ill employees a job-protected, unpaid leave for up to 26 weeks.

Such a national leave policy would provide parents the flexibility and economic security to bridge the worlds of work and family.

I am glad to see that Mr. Blankenhorn has discovered that demography is destiny. For those of us who have long been pointing to the record numbers of women who have entered the work force in the last two decades alone, and the ever-growing proportion of working mothers, it is a relief to be joined by others who have awakened to the fact that the myth of the Norman Rockwell family is on its last breath.

PAT SCHROEDER

Member of Congress, 1st Dist., Colo.

Washington, March 26, 1986

IN THESE TIMES MAY 7-13, 1986

Family fun

The left is trying to wrest back the banner of Family from the right. And rightly so. In the war of ideas, the New Right currently outspends the left by at least five to one and has appropriated fundamental American values such as family, work and patriotism to serve its narrow ideological interests. At least that's the view of the New York-based Institute for American Values (IAV), a new organization that hopes to follow in the footsteps of Norman Lear's prosperous People for the American Way, which acts as a watchdog against the religious right. The IAV has drafted a "family opportunity agenda" and also plans to link up academic research talent with community-based economic efforts. "This is not just a tactical move," explains co-director David Blankenhorn. "Progressives must start talking clearly about values and visions."

Progressive Counter Offensive

Editors:

The Institute for American Values, a newly formed public policy organization based in New York, is putting together a "Talent Bank" of progressive scholars from around the country. The purpose of the Talent Bank is to link the community of progressive scholars more closely to the worlds of public policymaking and political organizing. It will also serve as a publications clearinghouse and a vehicle for cooperative work and resource-sharing.

The current conservative ascendancy owes much to the fact that, since the early 1970's, the right has dramatically increased its investment in the organization, production and marketing of ideas. Last year, for example, we identified thirteen liberal/progressive multi-issue think tanks with combined budgets totaling under $15.7 million. By contrast, we found thirty-one explicity conservative/anti-liberal institutes whose combined budgets exceeded $72 million.

If you are interested in joining a "counter-offensive" that will bring progressive scholarship more directly to bear on policy making, opinion making, and organizing, let us hear from you: Institute for American Values, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2415, New York, NY 10107; (212) 246-3942.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Co-Director, Institute for
American Values □

dissent
SPRING 1986

To the editors:

Robert Kuttner is mistaken to say that Reagan and the right have only "one big idea," namely that "government is bad, private enterprise is good." In fact, conservatives today have three big ideas. One, as Kuttner states, is that government is bad. The second is that choice and tolerance are bad, Victorian morality is good. The third is that the Soviet Union is the source of nearly every problem in the world, and must be combated through military buildups and the use of force. The Heritage Foundation regularly packages these ideas as promoting "free markets, a strong defense, and traditional values." The unfortunate truth is that a renewed liberalism, armed with one "big idea" about the positive role of government in the economy, will have solved only part of the problem.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
New York, New York

THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 30, 1985

Family Income Needs Big Lift

By David Blankenhorn

LIKE FIVE MILLION New York families, mine recently received an April newsletter from Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.). In it he defends the Reagan administration's economic policies by stating that "family income is at an all-time high." The same point was made a few weeks earlier by James Miller III, who directs the federal Office of Management and Budget, in testimony before the Senate Budget Committee.

D'Amato and Miller are wrong. According to official government statistics — recorded, among other places, in the "1986 Economic Report of the President" — median family income reached its "all-time high" of $28,167 in 1973. Since then, it has stagnated. In 1984 (the last year for which statistics are available), median family income stood at $26,433 — well below the 1973 level and roughly equal to the median family income of 1970.

This long stagnation is one of the central economic facts of the decade. It is all the more remarkable when compared to what preceded it: From 1947 through 1973, the real income of American families doubled. During no other time in our history have we gone so long without an improvement in family income.

A recent study by the Urban Institute on the economic future of the Baby Boom compares the income of today's younger families to the income of earlier generations. For example, the real income of an average 30-year-old man in 1959 increased 49 percent over the next 10 years. If he bought a home, he paid an average of 16 percent of his monthly income in mortgage payments. In contrast, an average 30-year-old man in 1973 saw his income decline slightly over the next 10 years; he spent 21 percent of his income on mortgage payments. By 1983, a 30-year-old man not only earned less than did the average 30-year-old in 1973, but also faced paying 40 percent of his income in mortgage payments.

Women today in the labor force have not generated enough extra family income to offset these declines. According to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, the real income of families with children declined by 8 percent from 1973 through 1984. Unless these trends are arrested, a generation of young families will see the American dream of rising prosperity pass them by.

If we consider families by class instead of age, a similarly distressing picture emerges. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has calculated that the poorest 40 percent of America's families (those with incomes below $21,700) received only 15.7 percent of total national income in 1984 — their smallest share since the Census Bureau began collecting these statistics in 1947. The middle 20 percent received about 17 percent of the economic pie — also their lowest share since 1947. Thus, while the wealthiest families have improved their incomes, the bottom 60 percent — the vast middle class and the poor — are losing ground. We are becoming what has been called a "split-level economy," marked by growing inequalities between older and younger, richer and poorer.

Economists and demographers offer several explanations for these disturbing facts. First, millions of Baby Boomers flooded into the labor force in the 1970s, competing for jobs and depressing the wages of younger workers beginning their careers and families. Second, there is a strong and growing link between family breakdown — teen pregnancies and single-parent homes — and the increasing numbers of children in poverty. Third, structural changes in the U.S. economy — particularly, increased international competition and the resulting stagnation in basic industries — may be the cause of a "shrinking middle class" and growing income inequality.

The Reagan administration's policies, far from confronting these problems, have generally either ignored them or made them worse. For example,

Young families could see the American dream of rising prosperity pass by.

thanks to President Ronald Reagan's 1981 tax changes, the number of poor families paying federal taxes tripled from 1981 through 1983. For the first time, the federal government began taxing families into poverty. That is a family policy, but exactly the wrong kind. In the case of younger families, the administration opposes virtually every proposal to help them at key moments in family life, such as having a child or buying a home.

To reverse these damaging trends in family income is surely one of our most important national challenges. It will not be easy, and the challenge does not seem to place high on the administration's agenda. But one thing is certain: We will never reverse them as long as the public hardly bothers to notice when high officials report that "family income is at an all-time high."

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization doing research on family issues.

NEWSDAY, MONDAY, APRIL 28, 1986

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY 6, 1986

Family Income Is Far From 'All-Time High'

To the Editor:

Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato this month sent a newsletter to about five million New York families. In it, he defends the Reagan Administration's economic policies by stating that "family income is at an all-time high."

The Senator is wrong. Real median family income reached its "all-time high," $28,167, in 1973. Since then, it has stagnated. The most recent statistics are for 1984, when median family income stood at $26,433 — well below the 1973 level and roughly equal to the median income of 1970. These figures have been compiled by the official agencies of the Federal Government and appear, among other places, in the "1986 Economic Report of the President."

The long stagnation in family income is one of the central economic facts of the last 10 years. Yet the Senator seems not to know it. Given the incessant pro-family rhetoric of the Administration and its supporters in Congress, we might expect the Senator to get the facts straight when speaking of such an important family issue — especially when taxpayer's money is used to print and mail out these newsletters.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Co-Director
Institute for American Values
New York, April 28, 1986

Commentary

Recapturing The Family

By Peter Schrag, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

IN THE PAST decade, "the family" hasn't been so much captured by the right in America as it's been abandoned by the left. In the process, it's become a political code word for policies seeking to legalize school prayer, outlaw abortion, defund family-planning services, reduce social programs designed to protect children, and generally curtail whatever goes as permissiveness in the school and home.

Does it have to be that way? A handful of people — people like Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York — have been asking the question for years. But as data accumulate indicating how badly the family is in trouble, and as Democrats cast around for issues for 1986 and 1988, the family may become not only an issue but, just possibly, the issue around which a great many other matters are clustered:

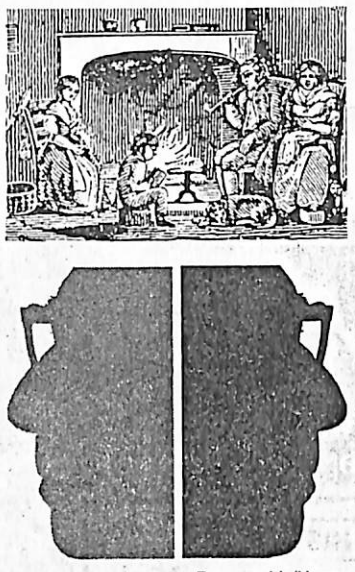
- The growing division between the 40 percent of American families whose incomes have been rising and the 60 percent whose incomes have not. For more than a decade, the real income of the average family in America has been stagnant.
- The struggles of families with children in which both parents have to work outside the home; the growing number of young couples certain they cannot maintain a reasonable standard of living and also have children; the appalling rate of teen-age pregnancy.
- The pervasive sense that something has happened to values in this country and the mounting awareness that the Moral Majority's definition of, and solutions for, that problem is woefully narrow, spiteful and ineffective.

A GROWING NUMBER of people in this country are now talking about those issues — Southern governors like Bill Clinton of Arkansas and Richard Riley of South Carolina, senators like Bill Bradley of New Jersey, congressmen like Barney Frank of Massachusetts and George Miller of California (and, of course, organizations like the Childrens Defense Fund, which has been waging this fight with both passion and objectivity for more than a generation). But perhaps the most thoughtful is a young man named David Blankenhorn who co-directs a two-person organization out of a tiny New York office grandly called the Institute for American Values.

With a couple of small grants, Blankenhorn, a former community organizer and, significantly, a fully accredited liberal, is trying to persuade the Democrats that the family is not merely the issue that can frame a great many others, but probably the only one on which they can win in the foreseeable future.

"There's been a reluctance to address the values questions," he said in an interview the other day. "As a result, conservatives have been allowed to appropriate the language of discipline, obligation and commitment. But if you don't talk about those things, all you have is programmatic abstractions."

Blankenhorn is persuaded that there is real public interest in such things as more flexible working hours, the right of parents — mothers and fathers — to take leaves when a baby is born, job sharing, improved child care, as well as for the more conventional demands and benefits of workers (wages, health insurance, and all the rest).



Bee graphic/Hugo

Significantly, he regards all those things as "problematic" if they're cast as women's issues or as poverty issues. "There's a hunger for purposes larger than the self," he said, a point on which he is hardly a lone voice. But if the "compassion issues" can be set in the context of broader values — and if they can be kept away from sexual politics, from fights about gay couples or communes and thus dismissed as just another piece of elitist preciousness — he thinks they can be converted into a strong unifying appeal.

NONE OF THIS is certain, of course. Recapturing the family, like the parallel hope of many Democrats that they will soon escape both the spell of Reagan and their paralyzing thralldom to their own diverse and sometimes divisive constituencies, may still be more wishful thinking than political reality. "This can be our supply side," Oregon Congressman Don Wyden told Blankenhorn, a wish that hardly seems worth realizing.

Yet there is a lot of force in Blankenhorn's argument that the family is the best thing the Democrats have — that unless there is a recognizable disaster in the economy or in foreign affairs, "the family is the only thing that allows us to be oppositional rather than mimics" and probably the most important issue on which the Republicans are likely to have difficulties within their own ranks. Beyond the family rhetoric, the fundamentalist right within the Republican Party has little to offer the country — no solutions for families struggling to survive, no services for poor or abused kids, no program for teen-age pregnancy other than its own high puritanical dudgeon.

Nor does it have a social agenda with which the party's libertarian, yuppie elements can make common cause. If the Democrats can push a value-informed family and children's agenda hard enough, they may not only put new political life into their politics, they may drive a wedge into the Republican Party at its most vulnerable point. Barney Frank may not be right that the Republicans are going to have more trouble with their right in 1988 than the Democrats will have with their left, but there are precious few issues with which the Democrats — if they have their own house in order — can better press their opponents.

YET EVEN IF SUCH a strategy fails in the context of presidential politics for 1988, it can hardly fail in helping to restore the politics of compassion. One doesn't have to look long at the numbers to understand that the family is deeply in trouble, that more children live in poverty than did at the beginning of this "recovery," and that the whole idea of community has been attenuated by an officially sanctioned self-centeredness that's probably unprecedented in this country.

The Democrats, Bill Bradley said in an interview, "call themselves the party of compassion. But they should also be the party of conscience" — should provide not merely bureaucratic answers but pose the compelling question: "What do you owe (to the unemployed industrial worker, the family losing its farm, the urban young trying to survive on city streets)?" If the Democrats — if anyone — can use the family to regenerate such questions, not as appeals to interest groups, but in addressing the country as a whole, they will have done more than anyone could have imagined after the debacle of 1984.

May 14, 1986 The Sacramento Bee

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Newsday

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 1986

The Democrats Can Win On Family Issues

By David Blankenhorn

FAMILY CONCERNS and family values offer Democrats their best opportunity to articulate a new vision and redefine the national debate on social policy.

The family is the only theme that divides Republicans while uniting Democrats.

Under Ronald Reagan, the Republicans' greatest achievement has been their ability to unite social conservatives and economic conservatives into an electoral coalition. Social conservatives are the generally blue-collar, often formerly Democratic, followers of the New Right and television evangelists such as Jerry Falwell; they focus on "moral issues" such as school prayer, pornography and homosexuality. Economic conservatives are the traditional business-oriented Republicans of Main Street and Wall Street; they focus on trickle-down economic policies.

Family issues split this coalition. The New Right pushes a backward-looking family agenda that is unpopular with 80 percent of the electorate, but which is now enshrined in the Republican platform. Economic conservatives, on the other hand, use family themes mostly as window dressing for their anti-egalitarian economic program.

Thus the family debate isolates and spotlights the most unattractive element of the Republican Party: the New Right and the Moral Majority. (The Moral Majority is so unpopular that it recently changed its name to the Liberty Federation.)

On the other hand, family issues could unite Democrats. The most hotly contested political constituency is the 22- to 40-year-olds, the baby-boom generation which now composes nearly 40 percent of the electorate. These voters now face acute pressures as they buy a first home or have children.

Democrats helped an earlier generation of families climb into the middle class, and higher, with initiatives such as Federal Housing Administration home loans and GI Bill college educations.

Good policy, and good politics, demand new initiatives for today's young families in the areas of home ownership, child care and flexible workplaces for working parents.

Blue-collar voters deserted the Democrats in large numbers in 1980 and 1984, partly because the party's elite were seen as indifferent or hostile to traditional values. A pro-family appeal would help Democrats win back their former rank and file.

Strong family policies would help the poor by recognizing children in poverty as our nation's greatest moral challenge. Welfare reform and investments in health care, nutrition and education for poor children would affirm a positive role for government and build on the best of Democratic traditions.

One of today's best-kept secrets is that family income is stagnating or declining for most families. Since 1973, the real income (adjusted for inflation) of families with children has dropped 8.3 percent.

Democrats could discover that this long-term decline in family income is the weakest point in their opponents' economic armor.

Family issues also meet the need of Democrats to speak about values. Today there is a longing among Americans for purposes larger than the self, beyond "do your own thing."

But Democrats have often been unable to convey a clear message about values. They have stressed rights more than obligations, tolerance more than discipline, social compassion more than individual responsibility.

The family theme conveys a moral message and binds policy ideas into a larger vision. It should unite otherwise disparate issues into a genuine profamily movement that, unlike the one led by Jerry Falwell and company, would be true to its name.

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that does research on family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Tax reform should strengthen families

THE PRESS-TELEGRAM - Long Beach, California
July 17, 1986

By David Blankenhorn
and Judy Farrell

Congress and the president now seem poised, for the first time in 40 years, to enact major tax reform legislation. A bipartisan consensus, rapidly approaching the status of conventional wisdom, now holds that the tax code should be cleansed of almost all loopholes, deductions and incentives in order to pay for substantially lower marginal rates.

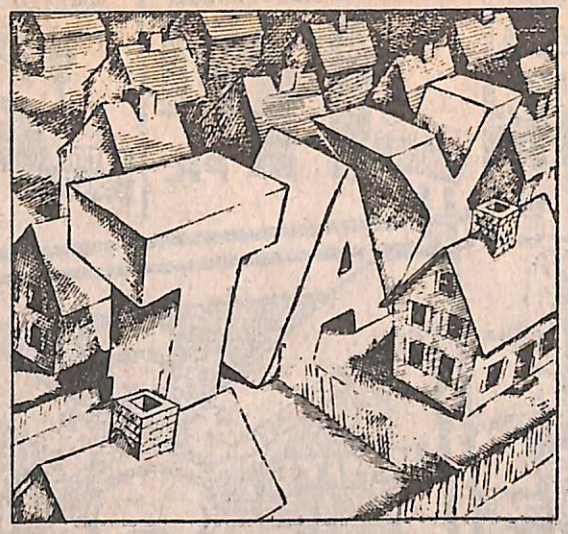
At the same time, the debate over the American family is growing louder. Pro-family rhetoric from Republicans and Democrats alike may soon register on the Richter scale. Policy makers now recognize that families are in trouble — from family breakdown and teen pregnancies, from stagnant or declining family incomes, and from pressures facing young families in which both parents work. Thus a growing consensus demands that family values guide public policies.

It would be a great tragedy if these two goals — to reform taxes and to strengthen families — were treated as separate and competing. After all, the Internal Revenue Code is our nation's single most important family policy. Yet now that the movement toward tax reform has turned into a stampede, we will hear constantly that the tax code must be neutral — that it must not be twisted by politics into an instrument for solving social problems. Loopholes and deductions are the new enemy of everyone but the "special interests."

Much of this analysis is commendable. The current tax code is indeed a vast feeding ground for every vested interest able to form a PAC and hire a lobbyist. In fact, these perversions, combined with simple neglect, explain why the tax code is now structured to promote nearly everything *except* families.

But American families are not simply another special interest. They are society's most important institution; our most valuable national asset. That's why policy makers should use the tax code consciously to promote their stability and well-being — even if doing so compromises notions of neutrality and simplicity.

What would pro-family tax reform look like? Both major proposals currently before the Congress — the Rostenkowski plan approved by the Democrat-led House, and the Packwood measure passed by the Republican-led Senate — are



far superior to the current tax code. Both, for example, would remove about 6 million poor families from the tax rolls, thus ending the destructive policy, initiated by the Reagan tax changes of 1981, of taxing families into poverty But neither of the reform bills does as much as it could, and should, to help families.

In the coming debate, tax reformers who also want to be pro-family should propose a "family tax credit" that would provide targeted tax relief for families that are raising children. It could be achieved by raising the dependent exemption for children to $3,000, compared to $1,080 under current law and up to $2,000 under the Rostenkowski and Packwood plans. To help poor families, whose credits may exceed their tax liability, the family tax credit should be refundable. And to target most of the relief to where it is most needed, the broad middle class — the credit should be phased out for wealthy families. Assuming, as does the Packwood plan, a tax rate of 15 percent for most families, the credit would amount to about $450 per child.

This is hardly a radical idea. Remember that in 1948 the child exemption was $600. Yet the Treasury Department recently adjusted this figure for inflation and calculated that if the dependent exemption were to help families today as much as it did in 1948, the exemption would be $5,600. Raising it to $3,000 today would only restore part of what families have lost to inflation since 1948.

Today if you buy a racehorse, you can deduct all the expenses of raising and caring for it. Yet if you have a child, you can deduct only $1,080 under current law, or up to $2,000 under the two reform plans. As any parent knows, the deduction is only a tiny fraction of the real cost of raising a child.

A family tax credit would recognize that our wisest investment is in our nation's children.

Finally, such a measure would boost real income for the majority of American families who have faced an economic squeeze in recent years. Real family income, after have doubled from 1947 through 1973, has stagnated for the past 12 years, and was lower in 1984, at $26,433, than it was in 1973, when it reached $28,167. Hardest hit have been families with children, whose real median income has dropped 8 percent since 1973 — precisely the famiies that would benefit from a family tax credit.

Of course this reform, like any, is not free — economically or politically. Economically, it would require a great measure of progressivity in the tax.code. Yet the central flaw of the current reform plans is that benefits are skewed toward the affluent. Under the Senate plan, for example, taxpayers earning more than $200,000 a year — 0.2 percent of the workforce — would enjoy 16.1 percent of the total individual tax cut. A family tax credit would redirect some of this windfall toward the bottom 60 to 70 percent of the nation's families.

Politically, it would require Congress to lean against the winds of current fashion — to moderate the proposed reductions in the top marginal rates for busineses and individuals in order to pay for family-oriented deductions. Ultimately, however, if the best politics is to make good policy, pro-family tax reform may prove to be twice-blessed.

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that is doing a research project on family issues. Judy Farrell is project coordinator for the Economic Policy Council of the United Nations Assocication in New York, which recently published a report on "Work and Family in the United States: A Policy Initiative."

VIEWPOINT

SAN ANTONIO LIGHT SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, 1986

The Democrats can win on family issues

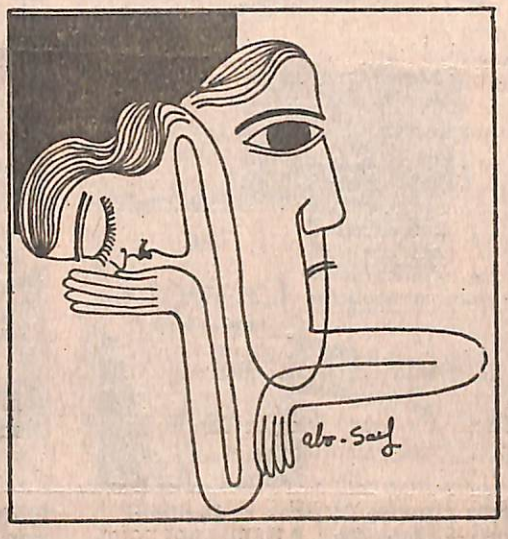
By DAVID BLANKENHORN

In this year's political campaign, the family can provide the Democrats with the vision they need so badly. Family concerns and family values offer Democrats their best opportunity to redefine the national debate on social policy.

The argument would go something like this: The American family is in trouble — from family breakdown, child poverty, teen pregnancies, stagnating income for the average family, and the pressures facing young families in which both parents work. It would position Democrats as the party committed to the security and well-being of the family.

The family theme represents the only issue that divides Republicans while uniting Democrats. Under Ronald Reagan, the Republicans' greatest achievement has been its ability to unite social conservatives and economic conservatives into an electoral coalition. Social conservatives are the generally blue collar, often formerly Democratic, followers of the New Right and the television evangelists such as Jerry Falwell; they focus on "moral issues" such as school prayer, pornography and homosexuality. Economic conservatives are the traditional business-oriented Republicans of Main Street and Wall Street; they focus on trickle-down economic policies.

Family issues split this coalition. The New Right favors a backward-looking family agenda — they oppose the whole idea of women working outside the home, for example — that is unpopular with 80 percent of the electorate, but which is now enshrined in the Republican platform. Economic conservatives, on the other hand, use family themes mostly as window-dressing for their anti-egalitarian economic program. They believe in neither the right-wing "pro-family" movement nor any version of a progressive family policy.



On the other hand, family issues could unite Democrats and highlight their best ideas. The most hotly contested political constituency currently is the 22-40 year-old baby-boom generation, which now comprises nearly 40 percent of the electorate. Family issues have special appeal to these voters who now face acute pressures at key moments in family life, such as buying a first home or having a child. Democrats helped an earlier generation of families climb into the middle class, and higher, with initiatives such as FHA home loans and GI Bill college educations. Good policy, and good politics, demand new initiatives for today's younger families in the areas of home ownership, child care and pro-family workplaces that offer greater flexibility for working parents.

Strong family policies would also help the poor by recognizing children in poverty as our nation's greatest moral challenge. Today more than one child in five in America is poor and 40 percent of all poor Americans are children — a tragedy closely bound up with teen pregnancies and single-parent homes. Welfare reform, public/private partnerships to reduce teenage sexual irresponsibility, investments in health care, nutrition and education for poor children — such initiatives affirm a positive role for government and build on the best of Democratic traditions. Yet they speak to widely shared family values and thus avoid the connotation of special-interest spending programs.

One of today's best-kept secrets is that family income is stagnating or declining for most families. Real median family income reached its all-time high of $28,167 in 1973. But in 1984 (the latest year for which statistics are available), median family income stood at $26,433 — well below the 1973 level and roughly equal to the median family income of 1970. At no other time in our nation's history have we gone so long without an improvement in family income.

Hardest hit have been young families: their income has dropped 8 percent since 1973. Income inequality — the gap separating the bottom 60-70 percent of families from the affluent minority — is wider now than at any time since the Census Bureau began to record family incomes in 1947.

The family should become a frame and an organizing principle for an entire Democratic policy agenda. It should be the theme that conveys a moral message and binds policy ideas into a larger vision. It should unite an otherwise disparate array of issues and concerns into a genuine pro-family movemdnt that, unlike the one led by Jerry Falwell and company, would be true to its name.

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that is doing a research project on family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH Fri., Aug. 29, 1986

Working Parents And The Work Place

Employers Need To Adjust Hours, Benefits To Reflect New Family Structure

By David Blankenhorn

How much longer will corporate leaders ignore the new realities of the American work force and the American family? In particular, how much longer will they undermine their own productivity by expecting today's workers to fit yesterday's personnel policies?

Surely corporate leaders see the trends that have transformed the labor force and restructured the family. Thirty years ago, men comprised 70 percent of the work force. Two out of three American families consisted of a breadwinner father and a mother who raised the children.

Today men are only 56 percent of the work force. Fewer than one in five families consist of two parents and children supported by a single income. Nearly 70 percent of mothers with school-age children now work outside the home as well as in it, as do more than half of all mothers with preschool children. By the turn of the century, demographers predict, the percentage of women in the labor force will roughly equal that of men.

But today's corporate personnel policies remain stuck in a 1950s time warp, rooted in the quaint assumption that employees have someone at home to attend to family matters. They don't. Above all, today's workers need flexible policies that help them bridge the gap between work and family — policies that permit working parents to be better parents. Yet today about 60 percent of working mothers are still not entitled to maternity leaves — even unpaid ones — when they have children.

Parental leaves for new fathers are even rarer: Fewer than one in three major companies offer them. Child care also remains a low priority. Only about 2,500 of the nation's 44,000 largest employers offer any assistance — financial, on-site centers or information and referral — to employees with young children.

Among these larger firms, fewer than one in three allow flexible working hours. About one in five offer flexible benefit plans, in which employees can purchase benefits, such as child-care assistance, that suit their individual and family circumstances. Fewer than one in five permit job sharing.

Meanwhile, public demand for what might be termed the pro-family work place is clearly growing. Over the past several years, the Roper Organization has polled Americans to determine which benefits they expect or desire from employers and which they do not. Their key finding in 1986: the rising demand for family-support benefits for working parents.

For example, the public's desire for company-supported child care has grown 9 percent in five years: 33 percent of all adults now consider it either an employer's "definite responsibility" or a "highly desirable" employee benefit. Similarly, 32 percent strongly endorse job-sharing, up 6 percent in five years. Flexible working hours are now supported by 55 percent of the public. A recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll found that 52 percent of Americans agreed (37 percent disagreed) that "companies should be required by law to let men and women take up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave from their work after the birth or adoption of their child." In the case of seriously ill children, 72 percent felt that parental leaves should be available.

The trends are clear. Support for the pro-family work place will continue to grow as a growing proportion of the work force consists of parents who require new flexibility in balancing the demands of working and parenting.

Fortunately, a small but growing number of corporations and trade unions are setting examples for others to follow. Merck & Co., a major pharmaceutical firm, offers job-protected parental leaves, for fathers as well as mothers, for up to 18 months. Merck also allows flexible working hours and offers several on-site or nearby child-care centers.

American Can Co. has established a flexible benefits program that is both cost-effective and popular among employees. American Telephone and Telegraph, Corning Glass Works, Levi Strauss and Co. and Steelcase Inc. have demonstrated similar leadership and creativity. Among trade unions, the Service Employees International Union and the Communications Workers of America have insisted on the importance of family-support benefits in contract negotiations.

Those employers who have introduced pro-family reforms have done so not despite their concern for the bottom line but because of it. They have found, not surprisingly, that flexible work-place policies result in less absenteeism, lower employee turnover, better recruitment capacity and higher employee morale. They recognize, moreover, that these investments in people — what economists call the human capital approach — are precisely the right strategy for improving American competitiveness in today's global economy.

We should follow these leaders. We cannot afford to ignore today's demographic and economic realities — to do so would be a double tragedy, undermining both our work places and our families. By now the basic features of the pro-family work place are clear. So are its benefits to both employer and employee. It remains only to be recognized as an idea whose time is already overdue.

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based organization that does research on family issues.

PERSPECTIVE

IN THESE TIMES AUG. 20-SEPT. 2, 1986

To win a new majority focus on family needs

By Steve Max

*Steve Max, curriculum director of the Midwest Academy and veteran organizer, addressed the 12th annual Academy/Citizen Action retreat in late July (*In These Times, *Aug. 6). After describing the emergence of a "post post pre-industrial society" —manufacturing shifting overseas, robots taking jobs, a mixture of economic "bust" in the farm, manufacturing and mining heartland combined with a "boom" in sales, service, speculation and military employment, Max argued that the left must take family issues away from the right. This is the conclusion of his speech.*

WHAT PARTICULARLY concerns us is the effect of this changing economy on our lives and the lives of our families. Starting in 1973, the steady rise in the middle class standard of living, enjoyed by many families since World War II, came to an end. The social reality behind the statistics is complicated, because no one is really average. Many people have been protected from the fall in family income and for others it has been much worse. Among our friends and members, those most protected from the fall in family income were already middle class by 1973. They own a home with a low fixed-rate mortgage. They work for a company that isn't laying off and has a pension plan. Many are union members but many are not. For them the economy still works.

Three groups in the Citizen Action constituency are hit hardest by the fall in family income: the working poor trapped in minimum jobs, including so many single mothers; industrial workers and farmers losing jobs or land; and third, by far the largest group, young people. They are part of the baby boom, the first post-industrial generation to raise families in an economy very different from the one in which their parents worked.

On the whole, they won't do as well as their parents did. A young man, 19 years old, leaves his parents' home to start his own. During the decades of the '40s, '50s and '60s, by the time that the man was 30 years old, he would already be making one-third more money than his father made the year that he left home. (That's adjusting for inflation.) In the '70s and '80s that man at age 30 is making 10 percent less than his father made.

As the ability of men to earn enough money to support a family falls, more married women with children will go to work. Our organizations have been concerned with the right of women to work without discrimination, but there is more to the problem. Many mothers of small children don't want to work but have lost that option. Among younger married women (age 25 to 35) only half worked back in 1974. Today two-thirds work. The most telling fact is that the number of working women with children under the age of three is rising fastest of all. They had held out while other women were taking jobs. Now economic conditions are pressing them to work. Half of all mothers of infants are back in the work force within a year, and this raises child care to the level of a national problem greater than it has ever been before.

Other problems are starting to rise out of the new economy. For the last 50 years job protection and stability grew, secured by personnel policies, collective bargaining and legislation. That's over. The new trend is toward temporary employees and part-time workers. Companies are restructuring jobs so that more can be done part-time. Over the last decade there has been a 25 percent increase in the use of part-time or temporary workers. It's the Kelly Girl era. Mostly women are involved. One firm interviewed saves $2.50 an hour on every temporary secretary they hire. The pay is lower and there are no raises, no vacations, no sick leave, no maternity leave and no benefits. It was one thing for the wife of a union member to take a part-time job, but now we are seeing more and more families without adequate health insurance or pensions.

(cont.)

New family agenda

The outlines of a new national family agenda for this new generation is starting to emerge. It comes from the needs of people working service and technical jobs and living in two-wage-earner families or families headed by women. It involves some traditional issues, but there are new necessities for life in the new economy. Day care; maternity and paternity leave; pre-school education; life and health insurance; pensions; health care for children, parents and grandparents; flexible hours; job sharing; housing and, of course, wages top the list. It's also clear that a college education is a necessity just to get a decent paying job. These are all things that members of the older generation either didn't need, got through the union or could afford to buy. Now families do need them, don't get them and can't afford them. New approaches have already begun. For example, San Francisco requires the developers of office buildings to provide money or space for child care, and Congress is now debating a bill requiring employers to give an 18-week leave for childbirth.

Many of us couldn't say 'family.' Our parents lived there. Or it seemed like an obstacle to women.

We progressives have always been for family issues, but we have always called them by other names: women's issues, children's issues, labor issues, poor people's issues or seniors' issues. We segmented them. When we have had the chance to state them in the broadest way, to say family issues, we backed off from it. We narrowed the appeal. Many of us just couldn't use the word family. I don't know why. Perhaps it's a holdover from the '60s when family meant the place where your parents lived and you couldn't wait to get out and go to San Francisco. Perhaps it's because in the '70s an emerging feminist culture viewed traditional family life as an obstacle to women's equality. We can acknowledge that problem and still recognize that although lifestyle options are wider today than ever before, 84 percent of all Americans still choose to live in families, and that's not even counting the children.

These family issues have a double significance. They are important in their own right, but they can also be the key to building our organizations and rebuilding a progressive Democratic Party Majority. If Democrats can continued to hold their traditional labor and black support and can then reach out to this new generation of voters, now up for grabs, Democrats can win. If Republicans reach the same group, they can win. The numbers are clearly there. Whether or not Democrats have the will is another matter. The history of the Democrats in both the '30s and the '60s was that labor, civil rights and citizen organizations first organized a base and then imposed a program on a reluctant Democratic Party. Whenever that pressure has been relaxed, the Democratic Party has reverted to what it always was, the party of Grover Cleveland.

Defeating the right

Family issues are also a powerful weapon against the right wing. David Blakenhorn, co-director of the new Institute for American Values, reminds us that the electoral success of the Reagan Republicans is that they united two kinds of conservatives to build a majority. These were economic, pro-big business conservatives and cultural conservatives. Many of the cultural conservatives are blue-collar workers, union members, former Democrats and people who have no loyalty to the corporate agenda. They vote Republican because that's the party claiming to be pro-family. By "pro-family" Republicans mean prayer in school, opposition to pornography and to homosexuality and keeping women in the home. Since no one has laid out a real pro-family platform, they get away with passing that off as one.

Too many families see these problems as their own personal trouble. We have to make them visible social issues giving them a name and a voice. Most of the middle class sees itself as an unrepresented majority losing to better organized so-called "special interests." We have to build those links between the organized and the unorganized to stop the right from continually dividing on this point. Family issues are a common ground where this can be done.

When you look at how Republicans actually vote on issues of concern to families, they are anti-family. Right now they are trying to defeat the childbirth leave legislation that says that you get your job back after 18 weeks of unpaid leave. The *New York Times* quotes an unnamed Republican Senate aide saying, "We don't want to embarrass the president by sending him a pro-family bill that he can't sign." I don't think it was the intention of the sponsors, but there's a strategy. Force Reagan to veto pro-family legislation. Force Congress to answer roll calls on pro-family legislation. Raise it in the legislatures and city councils. Make it the issue in electoral campaigns.

This is truly the area in which the right is most vulnerable. The legislative record showing them to be profoundly anti-family and anti-middle class is the weak underbelly of Reaganism. They make great efforts to conceal it behind a smoke-screen of rhetoric and phony issues. They play on people's emotions and fears without providing real solutions to the central problem of our lives. But the crisis deepens around them.

If we can end the deception over who is pro-family, we can destroy one of the right's most powerful weapons, split their base, defeat them and bring a new constituency into our organizations at the same time. The situation is now ripening for a progressive populist counterattack. ■

The Boston Herald, Sunday, September 7, 1986

Personnel policies should be updated

David Blankenhorn, 30, is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that does research on family issues. He was an organizer and later a regional director for Massachusetts Fair Share. Blankenhorn graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University and the University of Warwick in Coventry, England, with distinction.

By DAVID BLANKENHORN

DAVID BLANKENHORN
American Values Institute

GUEST COLUMNIST

HOW much longer will corporate leaders ignore the new realities of the American workforce and the American family? In particular, how much longer will they undermine their own productivity by expecting today's workers to fit yesterday's personnel policies?

Surely corporate leaders see the trends that have transformed the labor force and restructured the family. Thirty years ago, men comprised 70 percent of the workforce. Two out of three American families consisted of a breadwinner father and a mother who raised the children.

Today men are only 56 percent of the workforce. Fewer than one in five families consist of two parents and children supported by a single income. Nearly 70 percent of mothers with school-age children now work outside the home as well as in it, as do over half of all mothers with pre-school children. By the turn of the century, demographers predict, the percentage of women in the labor force will roughly equal that of men.

But today's corporate personnel policies remain stuck in a 1950s time warp, rooted in the quaint assumption that employees have "someone at home" to attend to family matters. They don't. Above all, today's workers need flexible policies that help them bridge the gap between work and family — policies that permit working parents to be better parents.

Yet about 60 percent of working women are unprotected by as little as six weeks of compensated pregnancy leave.

Parental leaves for new fathers are rarer: fewer than one in three major companies offer even unpaid parental leaves. Child care also remains a low priority. Only about 2,500 of the nation's 44,000 largest employers offer any assistance — financial, on-site centers or information and referral — to employees with young children.

Among the nation's 1,000 largest firms, only one in seven offers flexible benefit plans, in which employees can purchase benefits, such as child care assistance, that suit their individual and family circumstances. A recent survey of 500 major firms found that fewer than one in three allow flexible working hours. Fewer than one in five permit job-sharing.

Meanwhile, public demand for what might be termed the "pro-family workplace" is clearly growing. Over the past several years, the Roper Organization has polled Americans to determine which benefits they expect or desire from employers, and which they do not. Their key finding in 1986: the rising demand for family-support benefits for working parents.

For example, the public's desire for company-supported child care has grown 9 percent in five years: 33 percent of all adults now consider it either an employer's "definite responsibility" or a "highly desirable" employee benefit. Similarly, 32 percent strongly endorse job-sharing, up 6 percent in five years. Flexible working hours are now supported by 55 percent of the public. A recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found that 52 percent of Americans agreed (37 percent disagreed) that "companies should be required by law to let men and women take up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave from their work after the birth or adoption of their child." In the case of seriously ill children, 72 percent felt that parental leave should be available.

Fortunately, a small but growing number of corporations and trade unions are setting examples for others to follow.

Those employers who have introduced pro-family reforms have done so not despite their concern for the bottom line, but because of it. They have found, not surprisingly, that flexible workplace policies result in less absenteeism, lower employee turnover, better recruitment capacity and higher employee morale.

We should follow these leaders. We cannot afford to ignore today's demographic and economic realities — to do so would be a double tragedy, undermining both our workplaces and our families. By now the basic features of the pro-family workplace are clear. So are its benefits to both employer and employee.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

USA TODAY
THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHED BY GANNETT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1986

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Guest columnist

Boost families through tax credits

NEW YORK — The tax code has been a vast feeding ground for every vested interest able to form a political action committee and hire a lobbyist. It is full of loopholes, deductions and incentives to promote nearly every activity imaginable — except raising families.

Yet families are society's most important institution, our most valuable national asset. Moreover, families today are in trouble — from family breakdown, child poverty, stagnating income, and the pressures facing young families in which both parents work.

That's why policy-makers should use the tax code consciously to improve their well-being and stability. The new tax bill is a step in the right direction. It eliminates most special-interest loopholes in order to pay for substantially lower marginal rates. It removes 6 million poor families from the tax rolls, ending the strange policy begun by the Reagan tax changes in 1981 of taxing families into poverty. But it fails to do as much as it could and should to strengthen families.

Reformers who want to be pro-family should back a "family tax credit" to provide targeted relief for families raising children. It could be achieved by raising the dependent exemption to $5,000 (from $1,080 under current law and up to $2,000 under the pending bill).

To help families whose credits may exceed their tax liability, the credit should be refundable. To target relief where it's most needed, it should be phased out for the wealthy. For most families with a 15 percent tax rate, the credit would save about $750 per child.

This is hardly a radical idea. In 1948, the exemption was $600. The Treasury calculates, adjusting for inflation, that if the exemption were to help families today as much as it did then, it would be $5,600. Raising the exemption to $5,000 would only restore what families have lost to inflation since 1948. A family tax credit would reaffirm our belief that raising children is not only a series of costly private choices, but also a social imperative that should be supported by public policy.

Of course, this reform, like any, is not free. It would require greater progressivity in the tax code — higher top marginal rates for businesses and individuals — in order to pay for family-oriented deductions for the middle class and poor.

Such an idea may not fit this year's political fashion. Yet, in the long run, if the best politics is to make good policy, pro-family tax reform will be twice-blessed. If it fails this year, where is the presidential aspirant bold enough to make it the centerpiece of a pro-family platform in 1988?

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1986

Strengthen Families to Break the Welfare Cycle

To the Editor:

Two cheers for Blanche Bernstein ("A Way to Break the Welfare Cycle, Op-Ed, Oct. 31), who argues that welfare reform should mean spending more, not less, on programs to improve the nutrition, health and early education of children in poverty. But I think she is mistaken to see such programs as the key to breaking the welfare and poverty cycle.

The heart of the problem is family breakdown — especially teen-age parenthood and single-parent homes. Public policies should address this problem directly by fostering stronger families and more parental responsibility. One idea, now being tried in Wisconsin, is to require teen-age fathers, whether they are married or not, to assume some financial responsibility for their children. Such a program is but one version of a broader idea that would increase requirements of child support for parents who leave their families through divorce or abandonment.

Another idea is to replace welfare payments, whenever possible, with guaranteed jobs, including child care. It would be costly, but it could offer recipients a genuine ladder out of poverty without the disincentives to work and to family formation that plague the current system.

No amount of intervention by the welfare system, at any stage, can replace strong families as the crucial departments of health, education and welfare for our nation's children. While we can and should spend more on health, nutrition and education of poor children, we must separate symptoms from root causes if the coming round of welfare reform is to break new ground in reducing poverty.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Co-director
Institute for American Values
New York, Oct. 31, 1986

To the Editor of Commentary:

Michael Levin dismisses all the recent commotion about "family policy" with a simple prescription: mothers should stay out of the labor force and tend to their children.

Listen, you 70 percent of all mothers with school-age children who work outside the home as well as in it—your problem has been solved. Quit work, stay at home. Get serious, Mr. Levin. The fact is there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that the entry of women into the labor force is temporary or reversible. Women are joining the labor force across the globe for a variety of reasons—for example, greater education—which have little to do with Mr. Levin's morality tale of family-hating feminists. A policy prescription which assumes the reversal of this trend is simply not relevant to today's realities, or tomorrow's.

Mr. Levin is also quite careless with his facts. For example, he declares that family-policy advocates have "passed over in silence" the idea of raising the child exemption in the federal tax code. Perhaps Mr. Levin is not familiar with the often-cited proposals on this topic from family-policy advocates like Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Children's Defense Fund, or even my own organization. Similarly, Mr. Levin's notion that real wages and family income are of no interest to family-policy supporters will come as quite a shock to nearly everyone I know in the field. Mr. Levin proposes "a rise in real wages" as part of his pro-family program—does he really think that anyone finds this idea too hot to handle?

By erecting such straw men, Mr. Levin seeks to hold family-policy advocates responsible for women's entering the labor force. In fact, the opposite is true: it is because women are working that new policies are being proposed to help today's parents bridge the gap between work and family.

The stage is now set for an important national debate on the family. Some voices, including Mr. Levin's, will insist that the only way forward is to repeal the last thirty years of new opportunities for women. Surely there are better ideas around than that one.

David Blankenhorn
Co-Director, Institute for
American Values
New York City

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Los Angeles Herald Examiner

Sunday January 4, 1987

The politics of unwed parenthood

By David Blankenhorn

Unwed teen-age parents, surely one of our most intractable social dilemmas, have now become the focus of national attention. A recent Harris poll finds that more than 80 percent of Americans regard teen pregnancies as "a serious national problem" requiring new efforts by schools, parents and the media. In the past year, a spirited debate has erupted across the country over the wisdom of allowing school-based health clinics to prescribe or dispense contraceptives to teen-agers. Even presidential aspirants, looking to 1988, are staking claims to the issue, often as part of a broader "pro-family" program.

A blizzard of studies and policy recommendations are now available from across the political spectrum. Two new reports from the Reagan White House — one on welfare reform, the other on the American family — endorse the "Just say no" approach to teen sexuality. The National Research Council, on the other hand, just released a new volume, "Risking the Future," that embodies the liberal approach of nonjudgmental counseling and contraceptive education.

Yet despite this flurry of attention, there has been little progress in reaching a national consensus about even the definition of the problem, much less the proper response. So far the debate has yielded more heat than light, generating emotional intensity and useful insights in inverse proportions. Why is this the case?

The main reason is that neither liberalism nor conservatism today can frame the issue and propose remedies in a way that rings true to most Americans. Both paradigms have lost their power to explain; neither can make sense of either the empirical evidence or our broadly shared values. Of course, it is precisely the growing irrelevance of both schools of thought that hinders our understanding of many difficult issues today. But with no issue is this failure more tragic than that of unwed parenthood. The result is that we have no common approach, no coherent policy that attacks the root problem.

The key facts are simple enough. About one million teen-agers become pregnant each year, which results, after abortions and miscarriages, in about 500,000 births. Contrary to what many people believe, the rate of teen-age childbearing has been declining for years; due to contraception, abortion and delays in marriage, it is much lower today than it was in 1960, both proportionately and in absolute numbers.

Teen-age sexual activity, on the other hand, has increased significantly. Today, about 80 percent of boys and 70 percent of girls have had sexual intercourse before their 20th birthday. More than half of all teens are sexually active before age 18, as are more than 10 percent before age 15.

Pregnancies have also increased, though less rapidly, from a 1972 rate of 94 pregnancies per 1,000 teen-age girls, to a rate of 109 in 1984. Though the rate has apparently stabilized in the 1980s, it remains much higher in the U.S. than in other developed countries. About 40 percent of today's adolescent girls become pregnant at least once before age 20.

But the crux of the matter is unwed parenthood. The percentage of teen-age mothers who are unmarried has more than tripled over the past years, from 15 percent in 1960 to 56 percent in 1984. Four of 10 white teen mothers are unwed, compared to less than one in 10 in 1960. Today, nine of 10 black teen mothers are unmarried, up from four in 10 in 1960. Indeed, while minority teens comprise only 27 percent of the adolescent population, they account for nearly 60 percent of all births to unwed teens.

These statistics on unwed parents define the heart of the issue. All the social-science evidence available points to an inextricable link between unwed parenthood and a host of evils: poverty, infant mortality, joblessness, long-term welfare dependency, school failure, crime and family breakdown. In 1985, births to teen-age mothers cost the taxpayers more than $16 billion in welfare outlays alone. The complete costs — the individual and social costs of broken lives — cannot be calculated.

So it is not simply teen-age sexuality, or even pregnancy, that is new and disturbing. It is rather this explosion of unmarried parenthood, along with its attendant personal and social pathologies for both parent and child, that has crystalized into a national crisis. Yet too often neither liberals nor conservatives confront this issue directly.

The National Research Council scholars who wrote "Risking the Future" epitomize the liberal approach. Their central policy recommendation is to increase the use and availability of contraceptives, especially through school-based clinics. Contraceptive services, they urge, should be inexpensive or free, should be advertised to teen-agers through the media, and should not require parental consent. In addition, they endorse a wide range of services and programs — from sex education to health care to jobs — for teen-age mothers and their children.

The flaw in this approach is that it reduces the problem of unwed parenthood to one of contraceptive ignorance. Yet neither common sense nor the report's own evidence support such a notion. About 85 percent of sexually active teen-agers report using contraceptives, though some are irregular users. Yet what mainly determines teen-agers' sexual behavior is not what they know about birth control, but what their world is like and what they believe about themselves. Do they come from strong, intact families? Do they do well in school? Do they feel good about themselves? Do they believe that unwed parenthood is morally wrong? Do they believe the future holds opportunity for them?

The determinant questions, in short, are not about the mechanics of contraception, but about opportunity, self-perception and values. To avoid unwed parenthood, teen-agers must have more than the means; they must also have the motive. No strategy that avoids these facts will be effective.

(over)

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Houston Chronicle Monday, March 16, 1987

Who looks out for the family?

by David Blankenhorn

THE *COSBY SHOW* is the nation's most-watched TV program because it conveys a message that Americans today yearn to hear: Families matter. Since the cultural revival of the American family may, by 1988, become a political revival as well, presidential aspirants are already scrambling to stake their claims to the "family vote."

"Family and children," says Democrat Bruce Babbitt of Arizona, "are the hub around which my social welfare policies revolve." Gary Hart of Colorado, the current Democratic front-runner, says that today's voters increasingly "think about issues in the context of their family — not some metaphorical family like 'the family of man,' but their own flesh and blood." Republican television evangelist Pat Robertson propounds "traditional family values" as the bywords of his presidential campaign. Both the Reagan White House and the Democratic Party have recently issued policy documents stressing their commitment to stronger families.

And for good reason. A recent Yankelovich poll shows that 60 percent of Americans believe that "family values" deserve "more attention" from government. A Harris poll finds that 52 percent of adults believe that family life has deteriorated since they were growing up. Over 70 percent think that problems affecting children have gotten worse. Over 50 percent say they would accept higher taxes to pay for better health care for poor children, more child care for working parents and more job training for teen-agers.

Through the early 1980s, the family was considered the sole political property of the New Right. "Pro-family," in this context, meant opposing abortion and homosexuality while supporting school prayer and the "traditional" family of Dad as breadwinner, Mom as homemaker.

Yet today the family debate is being redefined; it has outgrown its original sponsors. Many feminists, for example, now link family concerns to the women's movement, especially as more women seek to balance child-rearing with working. Conservatives are worried. Allan Carlson, who directs the Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank, admits: "Properly cast, 'family' might just turn out to be liberalism's long-awaited new idea."

Any pro-family agenda, Republican or Democrat, must recognize certain demographic realities. For example, the percentage of women in the labor force will soon roughly equal that of men — surely the greatest shift in family life during this century, and one that shows no signs of reversing.

Yet despite women working, real family income is declining for most families. From 1947 through 1973, median family income doubled, but since then it has stagnated, and was lower in 1985, at $27,737, than it was in 1973, when it reached $29,172. Hardest hit have been younger families, who see the American Dream of rising prosperity simply passing them by — an economic fact waiting, like an unexploded bomb, to become a political fact.

Finally, more than half of the nation's children will spend at least part of childhood with just one parent, the result of the world's highest divorce rate, plus the fact that unmarried women now account for more than 20 percent of all childbirths. Moreover, almost one child in four in America is born into poverty, and 40 percent of all poor Americans are children, a tragedy closely linked to family breakdown, especially teen pregnancies.

Any presidential aspirant seeking to confront these realities should begin with "pro-family tax reform" that offers targeted relief to families raising children. It could be done by raising the child exemption in the tax code to $5,000, up from $2,000 under current law. Such a credit would embody our belief that raising children is more than a series of costly private choices.

A second theme should be the "pro-family workplace." Today's parents need flexible policies that help them harmonize the demands of family and work, policies that permit them to be better parents. Both public and corporate initiatives should encourage parental leaves for childbirth, job sharing, flexible work hours, and on-site or nearby child care.

We also need to replace the current welfare system with a new program to promote family stability and economic independence. Instead of welfare benefits, the program would offer a guaranteed job, including child care, for all able-bodied recipients.

Too often, the current welfare system fosters dependency, encourages family breakdown and subsidizes teen pregnancies. Substituting jobs for benefits, while costly, would offer recipients a genuine ladder out of poverty without the disincentives to work and family formation that plague the current system.

A final theme should assert the importance of teaching "values" in our public schools. Our schools, like our society, have drifted too far from what used to be called "character development" — the teaching of basic moral values such as honesty and respect for law. The rededication to teaching what has been called "moral literacy" need not be a partisan political issue. Recent Gallup and Harris polls show strong agreement among parents on the values they want taught, and a broad consensus that schools should do a better job. So long as "teaching values" does not become a code for imposing religious or political views, it will attract bipartisan national support precisely because it reinforces popular family values.

These four themes suggest a national family agenda that is neither liberal nor conservative, Republican nor Democratic. It confronts the core issues facing the American family and will fit the strategic needs of either party. Thus it is twice blessed: good policy and good politics. Where is the candidate to embrace it?

Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York.

Translating 'Pro-Family' Political Slogans Into Social Action

THE SACRAMENTO BEE
Thursday, March 19, 1987

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, an organization based in New York that studies families and related private and public policy. It will convene a national Commission on the American Family.

By David Blankenhorn
Special to The Bee

THE STATE Assembly's Human Services Committee will hold hearings Friday and Saturday in San Francisco on "The Changing Family to the Year 2000." In 1983, this same committee's hearings on "The Feminization of Poverty" helped articulate a moral message and legislative agenda concerning women and children in poverty that was heard, if not always acted on, around the nation. The new hearings are intended to broaden that message from one about women in poverty to one about families — all families.

The new theme reflects a new cultural and political reality. Until very recently, "the family" was considered the sole political property of the New Right; "pro-family," in this context, meant opposing abortion and homosexuality while supporting school prayer and the "traditional family" of Dad as breadwinner, Mom as homemaker.

Yet today the family debate is being redefined; it has outgrown its original sponsors. Many feminists, for example, now link family concerns to the women's movement, especially as more women seek to balance child-rearing and working. In general, liberals today are less reluctant to address issues involving values; indeed, many liberals now see the family debate as an opportunity to unite many of their policy ideas into a larger moral message. Conservatives are worried. Allan Carlson, who directs the Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank, admits that, "Properly cast, 'family' might just turn out to be liberalism's long-awaited new idea."

THIS TRANSFORMATION of the family debate from a sectarian dialogue among conservatives to a bipartisan national issue may become the most important social policy fact of the 1988 elections. Will any of the presidential aspirants become the electoral equivalent of Bill Cosby — the pro-family candidate? The first to lay claim to such a mantle could quickly attract a powerful constituency, which in turn might provide the key to the White House.

Any presidential aspirant seeking the "family vote" should begin with pro-family tax reform that offers targeted relief to families raising children. It could be done by raising the child exemption in the tax code to $5,000, up from $2,000 under current law. (Last year's tax reform raised the exemption from $1,080.) If phased out for the wealthy and made refundable for the poor, such a family tax credit would boost real income by about $750 per child for the majority of American families who have suffered an economic squeeze over the last 15 years.

The credit would embody our belief that raising children is more than a series of costly private choices. It is a social imperative that should be supported by public policy. Yet the family tax credit also would preserve private choice, helping some families to afford child care while also helping those parents who wish to stay at home with their childen.

A SECOND THEME should be the "pro-family workplace." Today's parents need flexible policies that help them harmonize the demands of family and work — policies that permit them to be better parents. Both public and corporate initiatives should encourage parental leaves for childbirth, job sharing, flexible work hours, and on-site or nearby child care. These ideas are rooted in the new realities of the workplace and family, yet their guiding purpose is quite traditional: to allow parents more time with their children.

Another theme would replace the current welfare system with a new program to promote family stability and economic independence. Instead of welfare benefits, the program would offer a guaranteed job, including child care, for all able-bodied recipients. In addition, stronger child support laws would require non-custodial parents, usually fathers, to assume more financial responsibility for their children.

Liberals and conservatives increasingly agree that the current welfare system fosters dependency, encourages family breakdown and subsidizes teen pregnancies. Substituting jobs for benefits, while costly, would offer recipients a genuine ladder out of poverty without the disincentives to work and family formation that plague the current system. Stricter child support payments would not only help mothers and children, but also, in the case of teen-agers, create strong reasons for boys not to make babies before they are ready to become fathers.

A final theme should emphasize the importance of teaching values in our schools. As cultural norms changed over the past 25 years, and as school populations became more diverse, schools became reluctant to teach what used to be called character development and citizenship — moral values such as honesty, respect for others and for the law, the link between effort and reward, and the benefits and responsibilities of living in a democracy. Yet silence or neutrality regarding these values is surely the wrong lesson to teach our children.

Teaching what has been called moral literacy will, of course, be a complex issue, requiring distinctions between basic values and narrow orthodoxies, between the importance of cultural tolerance and the danger of moral agnosticism. But it need not be a partisan political issue. Recent Gallup and Harris polls show strong agreement and remarkable good sense among parents on the values they want taught, as well as a broad consensus that schools should do a better job. So long as "teaching values" does not become a code for imposing religious or political views on young minds, it will attract bipartisan national support precisely because it reinforces popular family values.

These four themes suggest a national family agenda that is neither liberal nor conservative, Republican nor Democratic. It confronts the core issues facing the American family and will fit the strategic needs of either party. Thus it is twice-blessed: good policy and good politics. Where is the candidate to embrace it?

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH Thursday, March 19, 1987

Cosby For President?

Candidate Who Embraces Family Themes May Prove To Be A Winner

By David Blankenhorn

The Cosby Show" is the nation's most-watched TV program because it conveys a message that Americans yearn to hear: Families matter. Since the cultural revival of the American family may, by 1988, become a political revival as well, presidential aspirants are already scrambling to stake their claims to the "family vote." Both the Democratic Party and the Reagan White House have recently issued policy documents stressing their commitment to stronger families.

And for good reason. A recent Yankelovich poll shows that 60 percent of Americans believe that family values deserve more attention from government. A Harris poll finds that 52 percent of adults believe that family life has deteriorated since they were growing up. More than 70 percent think that problems affecting children have gotten worse. More than 50 percent say they would accept higher taxes to pay for better health care for poor children, more child care for working parents and more job training for teen-agers.

Through the early 1980s, the family was considered the sole political property of the New Right. Pro-family, in this context, meant opposing abortion and homosexuality while supporting school prayer and the traditional family of dad as breadwinner, mom as homemaker.

The family debate is now being redefined; it has outgrown its original sponsors. Many feminists, for example, now link family concerns to the women's movement, especially as more women seek to balance child rearing with working. Conservatives are worried. Allan Carlson, who directs the Rockford Institute, a conservative think tank, admits that "Properly cast, 'family' might just turn out to be liberalism's long-awaited new idea."

Will any of the 1988 presidential aspirants become the electoral equivalent of Bill Cosby — the pro-family candidate? The first to lay claim to such a mantle will quickly attract a powerful constituency, which in turn may provide the key to the White House.

Any presidential aspirant seeking the family vote should begin with "pro-family tax reform" that offers targeted relief to families raising children. It could be done by raising the child exemption in the tax code to $5,000, up from $2,000 under current law. (Last year's tax reform raised the exemption from $1,080.) If phased out for the wealthy and made refundable for the poor, such a family tax credit would boost real income by about $750 a child for the majority of American families who have suffered an economic squeeze over the last 15 years.

Such a credit would embody our belief that raising children is more than a series of costly private choices. It is a social imperative that should be supported by public policy. Yet the family tax credit would also preserve private choice, helping some families to afford child care and others who wish to stay at home with their children.

A second theme should be the pro-family work place. Today's parents need flexible policies that help them harmonize the demands of family and work — policies that permit them to be better parents. Both public and corporate initiatives should encourage parental leaves for childbirth, job sharing, flexible work hours and on-site or nearby child care. Such ideas are rooted in the new realities of the work place and family, yet their guiding purpose is quite traditional: to allow parents more time with their children.

A third theme of "from welfare to jobs" would replace the current welfare system with a new program to promote family stability and economic independence. Instead of welfare benefits, the program would offer a guaranteed job, including child care, for all able-bodied recipients.

Too often, the current welfare system fosters dependency, encourages family breakdown and subsidizes teen pregnancies. Substituting jobs for benefits would offer recipients a genuine ladder out of poverty without the disincentives to work and family formation that plague the current system.

A final theme should assert the importance of teaching values in our public schools. Our schools, like our society, have drifted too far from what used to be called character development — the teaching of basic moral values such as honesty, respect for law, the link between effort and reward, and the benefits and responsibilities of our democracy.

The rededication to teaching what has been called "moral literacy" need not be a partisan political issue. Recent Gallup and Harris polls show strong agreement among parents on the values they want taught, and a broad consensus that schools should do a better job. So long as teaching values does not become a code for imposing religious or political views, it will attract bipartisan national support. These four themes suggest a national family agenda that is neither liberal nor conservative, Republican nor Democratic. It confronts the core issues facing the American family and will fit the strategic needs of either party. Thus it is twice blessed: good policy and good politics. Where is the candidate to embrace it?

David Blankenhorn is co-director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that does research on family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

MESSENGER-INQUIRER, Sunday, March 22, 1987

Politics of teen-age pregnancy

Values, better education will help, not liberal use of contraceptives nor laissez faire conservative attitude

Editor's note: The Owensboro urban area ranked 35th out of 275 urban areas in highest percentage of teen-birth rates, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 1982 report. In 1982, 18.3 percent of all births in Owensboro were to women under 20.

By David Blankenhorn

Unwed teen-age parents have become one of our most intractable social dilemmas. A recent Harris poll finds that over 80 percent of Americans regard teen pregnancies as "a serious national problem" requiring new efforts by schools, parents and the media. In the past year, a spirited debate has erupted in New York, Chicago, Baltimore and other cities over the wisdom of allowing school-based health clinics to prescribe or dispense contraceptives to teen-agers. Even presidential aspirants, looking to 1988, are staking claims to the issue, often as part of a broader "pro-family" program.

Yet despite this flurry of attention, there has been little progress in reaching a national consensus about even the definition of the problem, much less the proper response. Why is this the case?

The key facts are simple enough. About 1 million teen-agers become pregnant each year, which results, after abortions and miscarriages, in about 500,000 births. About 40 percent of today's adolescent girls become pregnant at least once before their 20th birthdays.

Moreover, the percentage of teen mothers who are unmarried has more than tripled over the past 25 years, from 15 percent in 1960 to 56 percent in 1984. Today nine out of 10 black teen mothers are unwed. Indeed, while minority teens comprise 27 percent of the adolescent population, they account for nearly 60 percent of all births to unwed teens.

These statistics define the heart of the issue. All the social science evidence available points to an inextricable link between unwed parenthood and a host of evils: poverty, infant mortality, joblessness, welfare dependency, school failure, crime and family breakdown. In 1985, births to teen mothers cost taxpayers over $16 billion in welfare outlays alone.

The National Research Council's recently released study, "Risking the Future," illustrates, unfortunately, how many liberals approach this crisis. Their central policy recommendation is to increase the use and availability of contraceptives, especially through school-based clinics. Contraceptive services, they urge, should be inexpensive or free,

(continued)

TEEN PREGNANCIES

Messenger-Inquirer

Number of teen-age births to Daviess County residents.

Year	Under 15	15 to 19	Total births	% of teen births
1986*	7	188	1,240	15.7
1985	6	219	1,363	16.5
1984	6	225	1,405	16.4
1983	2	204	1,451	14.2
1982	8	264	1,487	18.3
1981	7	233	1,442	16.7

**Figures are only preliminary results

Source: Kentucky Center for Health Statistics, Annual Vital Statistics reports

This editorial also printed in: American Family, Arizona Daily Star, Chicago Tribune, New York Newsday.

should be advertised to teens through the media and should not require parental consent.

The flaw in this approach is that it reduces the problem of unwed parenthood to one of contraceptive ignorance. But neither common sense nor the report's own evidence support such a notion. About 85 percent of sexually active teen-agers report using contraceptives, though some are irregular users. Yet what mainly determines teen-agers' sexual behavior is not what they know about birth control, but what their world is like and what they believe about themselves. Do they come from strong, intact families? Do they do well in school? Do they feel good about themselves? Do they believe that unwed parenthood is morally wrong? Do they believe the future holds opportunity for them?

The determinant questions, in short, are not about the mechanics of contraception, but about opportunity, self-perception and values. To avoid unwed parenthood, teen-agers must have more than the means; they also must have the motive. No strategy that avoids these facts will be effective.

The authors of "Risking the Future" are especially weak on the question of values. They present their findings as objective, scientific research, undistorted by moral judgments. But don't they see that moral behavior goes to the heart of the teen parenthood dilemma? Don't they see that values is what this fuss is all about?

Conservatives usually choose different issues to dodge. While they are eager to frame the problem of unwed parenthood in moral terms, their acute myopia regarding its social sources can only be understood as the product of an ideology that is impervious to evidence. This ideology holds that government never solves social problems, but always makes them worse. Thus a recently released White House report on the family blames unwed parenthood and family breakdowns on "an anti-family agenda" that pursues "a government solution to every problem government caused in the first place."

This is a dangerous fantasy, which does violence not only to social reality, but to the conservatives' own campaign for moral values. For by pretending that public policy can do nothing about the social conditions that foster unwed parenthood, the conservatives expose their moral arguments to charges of hypocrisy. Indeed, moral exhortation without public policies to expand opportunity will not solve the unwed parenthood crisis, and may, as conservatives like to say, make it worse.

Photo by Rains Sacks

David Blankenhorn
Strong values and greater opportunities can work together.

Conservatives usually choose different issues to dodge. While they are eager to frame the problem of unwed parenthood in moral terms, their acute myopia regarding its social sources can only be understood as the product of an ideology that is impervious to evidence. This ideology holds that government never solves social problems, but always makes them worse.

What will work? One idea, now being tried in Wisconsin, is to require teen-age fathers, whether married or not, to assume some financial responsibility for their children. Stricter child support payments not only help mothers and children, but also create stronger reasons for boys not to make babies before they are ready to become fathers.

Any serious effort to combat unwed parenthood also must include an employment strategy, especially for poor and minority youth, for whom joblessness and unwed parenthood are closely intertwined. The evidence is also clear that better education and stronger schools would reduce unwed parenthood. A Children's Defense Fund study finds that girls with poor academic skills are five times more likely to become mothers before age 16 than are girls with even average skills.

Better education also means teaching values. For example, sex education should not only do a better and earlier job of imparting biological knowledge, but should be combined with what some school curricula now call "family life education" designed to reinforce family values, encourage sexual responsibility and promote communication between students and their parents.

Such ideas suggest a bipartisan approach to attack the causes, not just the symptoms, of unwed parenthood. Strong values and greater opportunities can work together, not against one another in some false political antagonism. Perhaps, as we now enter the post-Reagan era of social policy, it is a program whose time has come.

Editor's note: David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization in New York that does research on family issues and is sponsoring a national Commission on the American Family.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

The Washington
cofo memo
A Publication of the Coalition of Family Organizations
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Home Economics Association
Family Service America
National Council on Family Relations
March 1987

Divorce is no panacea

Four noted authors explored the "growing fragility of U.S. family structure," with special emphasis on the impact of divorce, at a symposium on "Family Values and Public Policy" in Washington, D.C. January 16.

Sponsored by the Institute for American Values, of New York City, the symposium featured: Dr. Sylvia Hewlett, author of **A Lesser Life;** Dr. Steven Bayme, author of **Family Policy: Current Debates and Challenges;** Dr. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, Professor of Research at Howard University's School of Social Work, and Dr. Ethel Klein, author of **Gender Politics.**

Sylvia Hewlett discussed the unforeseen consequences of no-fault divorce, whereby 49 percent of divorced fathers never see their children. She said that the practice of equitable distribution of financial resources in divorce settlements often results in the impoverishment of the single-parent family. Indicating that the average single parent family earns $9,000 a year in income, she called for a reassessment of the costs of no-fault divorce and suggested that "rewards and penalties for divorce need to be in place to modify behavior."

She urged that state legislators tighten child support enforcement and suggested that courts should establish a fixed standard in awarding child support: 17% of the wage for 1 child and up to 35% for 5 children or more.

Dr. Steven Bayme said that one solution would be to require a delay in divorce settlements until all issues of family are resolved. He suggested that intangible assets also needed to be taken into account in such settlements, such as graduate degrees of the primary earner in the family. He discussed the trend in New York State toward a model of social insurance whereby the state assures maintenance of a minimum income for single parent families.

"Our culture is promoting a climate where the bias is against marriage. Divorce is becoming one option among others rather than the course of last resort," according to Bayme.

Harriet McAdoo, who has written the book **Black Families,** discussed the seriousness of the divorce rate among black families. The problem, she said, is not so much structural as it is financial. She indicated that the divorce rate in black families is twice that of white families but that the black family is "poor before marriage, during marriage, and after divorce."

Dr. Klein, of Columbia University, was especially interested in the changing family with regard to the number of women in the workforce and the need for the workplace to adjust and meet this new family arrangement. She believes that it is in the interest of employers to help find solutions.

Dr. Klein said that benefits offered in the workplace are becoming a central issue: good health care, parental leave and flextime are much needed. She thinks that business is becoming increasingly aware of the impact that employer policies have on families. She believes that we are now striving to find a balance in our society that will allow parents to discharge their responsibilities while remaining compatible with the workforce.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 1987

Why Parental Leave Makes Sense

By David Blankenhorn

Should companies be required by law to allow parents up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave to care for newly born or seriously ill children? As Congress prepares to vote on the Family and Medical Leave Act, opinion polls show that most Americans favor the idea. With a majority of mothers in the workforce, including more than half of all new mothers, leaves of absence offer many parents a new opportunity to reach an old-fashioned goal: time with young children.

Though it might seem hard to oppose such a pro-family measure, the United States Chamber of Commerce has found a way. Parental leave may be a fine idea, the Chamber argues, but it would cost too much — $16.2 billion a year — in lost productivity, the expense of hiring temporary replacements and the cost of maintaining health insurance for those on leave.

Why should the rest of us have to spend billions to provide benefits for a few? If the parental leave measure is rejected by Congress, this logic will have killed it. Proponents of the bill, therefore, must confront it squarely and factually.

One obvious point ignored by the Chamber is that most of the costs are borne by the parents themselves. After all, they lose weeks or months of salary just when newborn or sick children are boosting family expenses. Parental leave extends job security, but it does not provide something for nothing.

Calling parental leave a "mandated benefit," as the Chamber insists on doing, confuses the issue. For employees, nothing is "mandated"; parental leave is an option for those who choose it and accept its costs. Neither is it a "benefit" so much as a minimum labor standard.

Further, the Chamber greatly overstates the alleged costs to business for providing leaves of absence. Nearly 60 percent of the estimated $16.2 billion cost results from increased payroll expenses, according to the Chamber's estimates. The Chamber asserts that companies affected by parental leave will turn to employment agencies, whose hefty fees make temporary workers more costly than permanent ones.

But in the real world, the opposite happens. Many firms now hire temporaries directly, avoiding employment agency fees. According to the Bureau of National Affairs, a private research and publishing concern in Washington, most companies find temporaries less expensive than regular employees. More important, most companies hire few temporaries or none at all. They simply rearrange work assignments whenever an employee is on leave. In some instances, parental leave actually reduces costs.

Much of the rest of the Chamber's estimate — more than $5.5 billion — is based on its projection of reduced productivity. But its assumptions are faulty. The Chamber assumes that companies are fully productive under current practices and that every new father and mother, given the opportunity, would take an 18-week leave. Existing programs, however, prove that not everyone will choose leave. Fathers, for example, are 10 times less likely to use it than mothers. Nor would everyone take the full 18 weeks.

More important, many new parents, especially mothers, quit their jobs rather than resume work immediately. Most eventually return but at a new job with a different employer. This type of turnover, ignored by the Chamber of Commerce, is costly for everyone. Hiring and training a new permanent employee can cost nearly the equivalent of a year's salary, according to an analysis in Training magazine. Parental leave would both reduce turnover and improve morale, thus increasing productivity rather than reducing it.

Oddly, a recent study by the Chamber confirms the view that parental leave can make companies more productive. A survey of companies offering parental leave found that more than 60 percent cited "recruitment and retention" of good employees as the main reason for the program. As demographers predict tighter labor markets, and even labor shortages, for the 1990's, many employers already recognize parental leave as a valuable policy that enhances the corporate bottom line.

The Chamber searches out costs but ignores benefits that reduce or reverse those costs. It questions the price of doing something but fails to evaluate the price of doing nothing.

Finally, consider the family's bottom line. A grim litany of statistics, from divorce to child poverty to teenage suicide, tells us that families are in trouble — in part because of policies that make it harder, rather than easier, to both earn a living and do right by their children.

Here the bottom line is simple. Working parents are more than a special interest, pleading for privileges in a zero-sum game. Stronger families benefit the entire society. Raising children is not merely a series of private concerns but also a social imperative that should be supported by policies such as parental leave. That's why a lobbyist for the Chamber of Commerce recently complained that "our usual allies think it's a family issue." It is. □

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a public-policy organization.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

AMERICAN FAMILY
The National Newsletter on Family Policy and Programs since 1977
Vol. X, No. 6 July 1987

A National Family Agenda?

by David Blankenhorn

Increasingly, Americans today sense that society's most important institution, the family, is in trouble and needs attention. If social concerns, like corporations, could be bought and sold in the marketplace, family issues would be this year's growth stock across the nation.

Culturally, a new bias toward family values shows up in popular television programs such as "The Cosby Show" and "Family Ties." Legislatively, family issues such as parental leave, child care and child poverty are generating new attention at all levels of government. Both the U.S. Congress and 28 state legislatures, for example, are now considering parental leave legislation. The number of new state laws addressing family concerns jumped from about 600 in 1984 to over 1,000 in 1986.

But in national political terms, there is not yet a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts. For example, most of the current presidential aspirants, both Republican and Democratic, now position themselves on one or two family issues such as welfare reform or child care. But so far no one has sought to become the political equivalent of Bill Cosby—the "pro family" candidate who offers a program to make stronger families a top national priority and the anchor for an entire social agenda. Despite its social importance and potential political appeal, what might be called a "national family agenda" still awaits its champion.

It is tempting, and perhaps somewhat accurate, simply to blame the candidates for this failure. But there is also at least one deeper reason. Too often, the debate over how to strengthen families degenerates into an ideological battle which pits one type of family against another.

Many conservatives want to strengthen only "traditional" families of Dad as breadwinner, Mom as homemaker. Yet today, "traditional" families account for about twenty percent of all families and about forty percent of all mothers with children under age eighteen—a

(over)

large and important minority, but still a minority. Moreover, an important strain of conservative thought holds that government itself is always the enemy—it never ameliorates problems, but instead, always makes them worse.

Liberals, on the other hand, usually concentrate on policies to help working parents, often patronizing stay-at-home parents as a rapidly vanishing species, quaint as a Norman Rockwell painting, and not particularly relevant to the current policy debate. Many liberals, moreover, turn the conservative view of government on its head, instinctively looking to government, rather than to families themselves, to solve problems that are largely the result of family breakdown.

This sterile polarization helps prevent the emergence of a broadly based, bipartisan national family agenda. Neither the liberal nor the conservative paradigm can frame the issues or propose remedies in a way that rings true to most Americans. Both have lost their power to explain; neither can make sense of either the empirical evidence or our broadly shared values. The result is that we have no common approach and no coherent policy agenda that addresses root problems.

Such paralyzing divisions can and must be overcome if the nation is to develop a substantive agenda to strengthen families—all families.

For example, all families would benefit from establishing the "pro-family workplace" as a national norm in both the public and private sectors. With a majority of mothers in the workforce, including more than half of all new mothers, most of today's parents need new initiatives to help bridge the gap between work and family—flexible policies that permit them more time with their children. Yet today's workplace policies too often remain stuck in a 1950's time warp, rooted in the assumption that employees have "someone at home" to attend to family matters. Most do not.

The basic features of the pro-family workplace would include: parental leave for new mothers and fathers, as well as leave for other family-related matters, such as sick children or elder care; job-sharing; flexibile work hours; benefits packets; and employer-supported child care.

Economically, the pro-family workplace is cost effective. Employers who have introduced such reforms have found that they result in less absenteeism, lower turn over, better recruitment capacity and higher employee morale. They are good ideas, not despite the "bottom line", but because of it.

More broadly, everyone, including stay-at-home parents, should care about the pro-family workplace because stronger families benefit the entire society. Parents who work are not some special interest, pleading for privileges in a zero-sum game. A grim litany of statistics, from divorce to child poverty to teenage suicide, tells us that families are in trouble—in part because of policies that make it harder, rather than easier, for parents to both earn a living and do right by their children. That is why the pro-family workplace is more than an economic issue, or workplace issue, or government issue—it is a family issue.

Secondly, a reformed tax code could strengthen all families. The tax code is probably the nation's most important family policy, but unfortunately, it is a family policy marred by unintended consequences and neglected priorities. Policymakers should instead use the tax code consciously to improve the well-being and stability of all families.

Pro-family tax reformers should propose a "family tax credit" to provide targeted relief for families raising children. It could be achieved by raising the dependent exemption for children to $5,000, up from $2,000 under current law. To help families whose credits may exceed their tax liability, the credit should be refundable. To target relief where it is most needed, it should be phased out for the wealthy. For most families, with a 15 percent tax rate, the credit would amount to about $750 per child.

"Economically, the pro-family workplace is cost effective. Employers who have introduced such reforms have found that they result in less absenteeism, lower turnover, better recruitment capacity and higher employee morale."

Such a measure would boost real income for those families who have faced an economic squeeze in recent years. Real family income, after having doubled from 1947 to 1973, has stagnated for over a decade, and was lower in 1985, at $27,737, than it was in 1973, when it reached $29,172. Hardest hit have been young parents with children, whose real median income has dropped 8 percent since 1973—precisely the families that would benefit from a family tax credit. Moreover, unlike other tax provisions such as the child care tax credit, such a family tax credit would not discriminate on the basis of family type—it would preserve private choice, helping some families to afford child care, for example, while also helping those parents who wish to stay at home with their children.

These are two themes—the pro-family workplace and pro-family tax reform—that could address the broad interests of families rather than the ideological interests of left or right. Certainly there are other such themes. As the nation yearns today for ways to strengthen families, no task is more important than articulating those themes and bringing them into the mainstream of the national policy debate.

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a policy organization in New York concerned with family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Letters to the Editor

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL FRIDAY, MAY 15, 1987

'Lamppost' Statistics Don't Shed Any Light

On Feb. 19, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce presented testimony to the U.S. Senate on "The Parental and Medical Leave Act of 1987." In a cost analysis of the proposed legislation, the chamber offered a "conservative estimate" of $16.2 billion a year as the price tag for "mandated parental leave."

In response to criticism of its cost study, the chamber now has retreated dramatically from its original position. In your April 28 Labor Letter, you describe a Chamber of Commerce tongue-in-cheek legislative "menu" that places prices on legislation sought by labor unions. The chamber's new price tag for "mandated parental leave" is $2.6 billion—a drop of more than 80% from its original position. (It uses the same new figure in a letter March 10 to one of the bill's sponsors, Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut.)

As was pointed out in congressional testimony by me and others, the chamber's cost analysis of parental leave is flawed both methodologically and conceptually. Indeed, the chamber's remarkable retreat from a highly publicized cost study only a few weeks after it was released suggests that the chamber is indulging in a vice best described by Mark Twain. It is using statistics as a drunk uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Executive Director
Institute for American Values
New York

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER
USA TODAY
PUBLISHED BY GANNETT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1987

New York: Parental-leave argument senseless

Guest columnist Bryce Christensen argued that parental-leave laws would lower birth rates and increase divorce. How? There is not a shred of evidence to show that allowing working parents more time with newborn children would lead to family breakup. Common sense suggests the opposite.

David Blankenhorn
Institute for American Values
New York

AFL-CIO news

VOL. 32, NO. 21
SATURDAY
MAY 23, 1987

Parental leave bill advances in House

Extends needed protections for working mothers and fathers

Two House subcommittees agreed that workers of either sex should have the right to take unpaid time off to care for a new baby without risking their jobs or losing health insurance coverage.

A labor-supported parental leave bill, applying to firms with 15 or more workers, was cleared by an Education & Labor subcommittee. A section of the bill dealing with federal employees was approved intact by a Post Office & Civil Service panel. The chairmen of the two subcommittees, William L. Clay (D-Mo.) and Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) are cosponsors of the measure.

The parental leave bill would allow up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave on the birth or adoption of a child or during a child's illness.

A separate provision would allow up to 26 weeks of unpaid leave for a seriously ill worker.

Clay is pressing for House action by this summer. A similar bill cleared the committee in the last Congress but never reached the House floor.

Meanwhile, Senate hearings continued on a companion bill introduced by Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.), enlivened by controversy over employer cost estimates.

Exaggerated cost

The Chamber of Commerce had initially testified that the parental leave portion of the bill would cost businesses $16.2 billion a year in lost productivity, the expense of hiring temporary replacements and the cost of maintaining health insurance for workers on leave.

When pressed for documentation, the Chamber acknowledged in a letter to Dodd that its estimate was based on a "worst case scenario" which ignored the fact that most medium-sized and large businesses already provide various parental leave benefits.

If it is also assumed that only about half those eligible would take the payless-leave option, the Chamber said, its "refined" cost estimates for parental leave shrink to $2.6 billion.

The Institute for American Values, one of the organizations supporting parental leave, has suggested that a further "refining" of the Chamber's figures would show that the benefits resulting from reduced turnover and improved employee morale might outweigh the actual dollar cost to employers.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1987

Just Raising Benefits Is Not Welfare Reform

To the Editor:

Frances Fox Piven and Barbara Ehrenreich (Op-Ed, May 30) oppose work requirements for welfare recipients as "a new form of mass peonage." Their alternative is simple: raise benefits. Certainly raising benefits is a good idea — but not good enough. In fact, to suggest that higher benefits alone constitute welfare reform is simply to ignore what the current debate is about.

The core problem is family breakdown. Unwed teen-age parenthood and single-parent homes have become tickets into poverty for the millions of young mothers and their children who make up the majority of welfare recipients. To address causes rather than symptoms, welfare reform must encourage strong families and parental responsibility. It must offer opportunities for independence rather than the false compassion of dependency.

These are not punitive notions, applicable only to the poor, but basic values shared by nearly everyone — especially the poor, who did not design today's system but suffer its results. Not a shred of evidence suggests that higher benefits alone will eliminate the current system's anti-family and anti-independence bias.

Job training might. Work requirements might, especially if child care and child-based tax credits are included. So might stricter child-support requirements for noncustodial parents, usually fathers, who leave families through abandonment or divorce.

Piven and Ehrenreich suggest that there is one idea out there — something bad called "workfare" — when in fact a diversity of policy reforms are now being tested at state and local levels. Some are better and more generous than others.

And we should not kid ourselves that true reform is cheap — it will probably cost more in the short term than simply raising benefits. But surely the challenge is to find humane reforms that work rather than settle for small improvements in a system that, at bottom, does not work.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Executive Director
Institute for American Values
New York, June 2, 1987

Shaping a Pro-Family Workplace

by David Blankenhorn

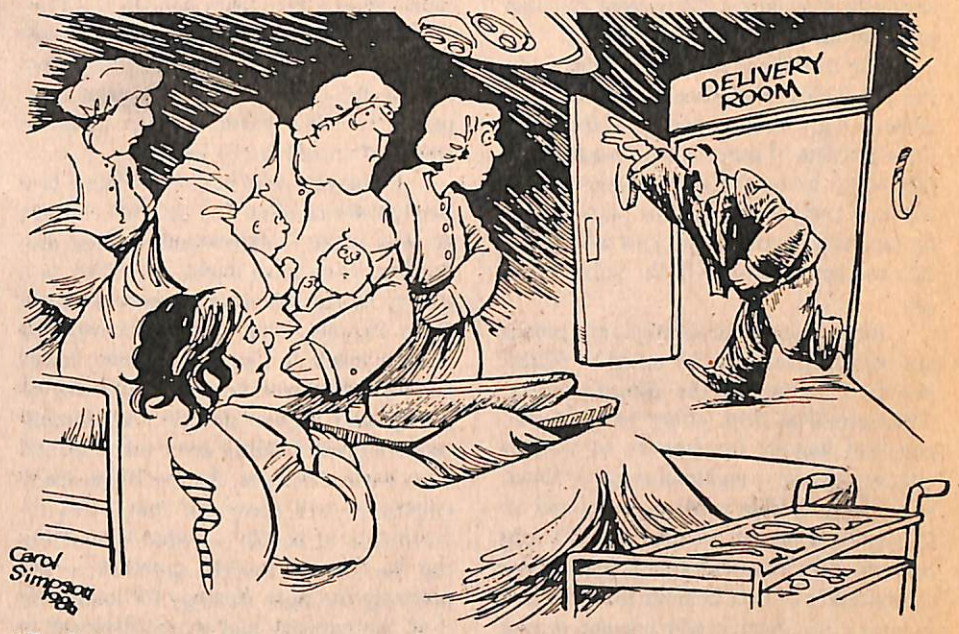
"I don't see the question of parental leave as a women's issue, and neither does this union. It's a family issue." So argues Clement Allen, a fourth generation coal miner and an official of the United Mine Workers — a predominantly male union now emerging as a leader within the labor movement on the issue of parental leaves for new parents.

On this Labor Day, two core challenges face the U.S. labor movement as it struggles to reverse its present state of decline. The first is demographic: to organize younger workers in the service and high-tech economy — the emerging majority whom Ralph Whitehead has called "new collars." The second is ideological: to frame an agenda that promotes labor's interests, but always as part of the broader public interest. Clement Allen's view of parental leave as "a family issue," and his union's promotion of it in both contract negotiations and legislative lobbying, suggests in microcosm what may become labor's most promising new strategy for meeting this dual challenge.

The strategy, in brief, is to demand for U.S. workers what might be called the "pro-family workplace." Such a strategy poses the question: How much longer will corporate leaders ignore the new realities of the American workforce and the American family? In particular, how much longer will they undermine their own productivity by expecting today's workers to fit yesterday's personnel policies?

Surely corporate leaders see the trends that have transformed the labor force and restructured the family. Thirty years ago, men comprised 70 per cent of the workforce. Two out of three American families consisted of a breadwinner father and a mother who raised the children.

Today men are only 56 per cent of the workforce. Fewer than one in five families consist of two parents and children supported by a single income. Nearly 70 percent of mothers with school-age children now work outside the home as well as in it, as do over half of all mothers with preschool children — surely the greatest shift in family life in this century, and one that shows no sign of reversing itself.



Impact Visuals

"Back to work Mrs. Johnson . . . your maternity break is over!"

But today's corporate personnel policies remain stuck in a 1950s time warp, rooted in the quaint assumption that employees have "someone at home" to attend to family matters. Most don't. Above all, today's workers need flexible policies that help them bridge the gap between work and family — policies that permit working parents to be better parents.

Yet today about 60 percent of working mothers remain unprotected by even as few as six weeks of compensated pregnancy — to employees with young children.

Among the nation's 1000 largest firms, only about one in seven offer flexible benefit plans, in which employees can purchase benefits, such as child care assistance, that suit their individual and family circumstances. A recent survey of 500 major firms found that fewer than one in three allow flexible working hours. Fewer than one in five permit job sharing.

Meanwhile, public demand for the "pro-family workplace" is clearly growing. Over the past several years, the Roper Organization has polled Americans to determine which benefits they expect or desire from employers, and which they do not.

"In Congress, labor has emerged as a major voice in support of the Family and Medical Leave of 1987, which would allow parents up to 18 weeks of unpaid family leave."

leave. Parental leaves for new fathers are rarer: fewer than one in three major companies offer even unpaid paternal leaves. Child care also remains a low priority. Only about 2,500 of the nation's 44,000 largest employers offer any assistance — financial, on-site centers or information and referral Their key finding: the rising demand for family-support benefits for working parents.

For example, the public's desire for company-supported child care has grown nine percent in five years: 33 percent of all adults now consider it either an employer's

(over)

"definite responsibility" or a "highly desirable" employee benefit. Similarly, 32 percent strongly endorse job-sharing, up six percent in five years. Flexible working hours are now supported by 55 percent of the public. A 1986 Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found that 52 percent to 37 percent of Americans agreed that "companies should be required by law to let men and women take up to eighteen weeks of unpaid leave from their work after the birth or adoption of their child." In the case of seriously ill children, 72 percent felt that parental leaves should be available.

The trendlines are clear. Support for the pro-family workplace will continue to grow as a growing proportion of the workforce consists of parents who require new flexibility in balancing the demands of working and parenting. Here is an agenda for labor that both reaches new constituencies and speaks clearly in the public interest.

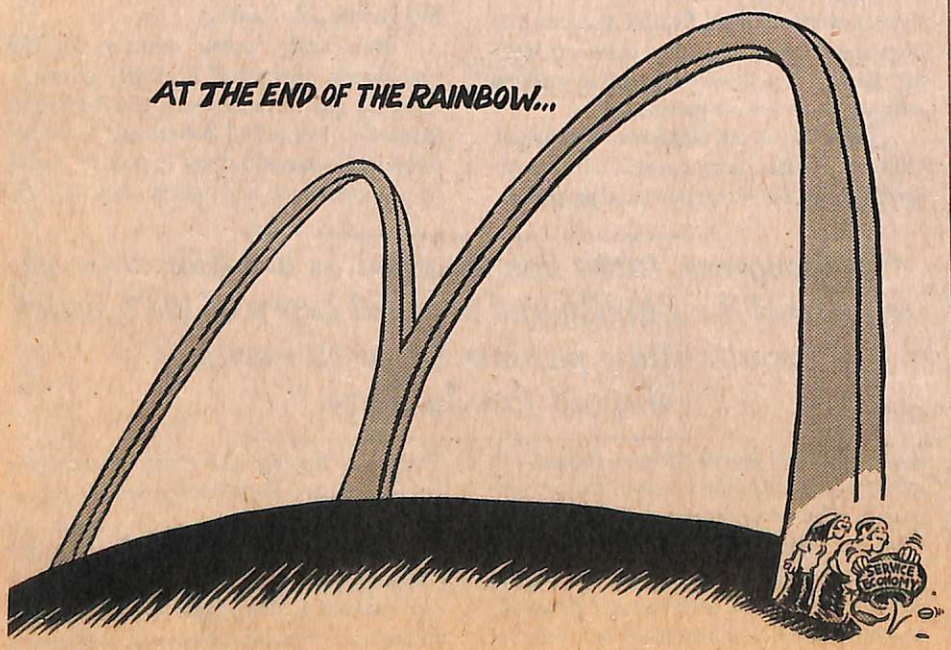
Already some corporations and unions are setting examples for other to follow. Merck & Company, the nation's largest pharmaceutical firm, offers job-protected parental leaves, for fathers as well as mothers, for up to eighteen months. Merck also allows flexible working hours and offers several on-site or nearby child care centers. The American Can Company has established a flexible benefits program that is both cost-effective and popular among employees. American Telephone and Telegraph, Corning Glass Works, Levi Strauss and Company and Steelcase, Inc. have demonstrated similar leadership and creativity.

Within the labor movement, both the Steelworkers and the Auto Workers, for example, recently negotiated child-care agreements with major companies. Today both the Service Employees and the Communications Workers regularly fight for family-support benefits in contract negotiations — pay equity, child care, parental leave, sick leave, and others — while the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers recently won contracts mandating "Work and Family" committees similar to the health and safety committees pioneered by the same union a few years ago. In the Congress, labor has emerged as a major voice in support of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1987, which would require companies to allow parents up to eighteen weeks of unpaid family leave.

Employers who have introduced pro-family reforms often find that the changes actually make their companies more productive. They have found, according to a survey by the Employer Supported Child Care Project, that flexible workplace policies result in less absenteeism, lower employee turnover, better recruitment capacity and higher morale. As demographers predict tighter labor markets, and even labor shortages, for the 1990s, many employers will recognize that these investments in people — what economists call the "human capital" approach — are precisely the right strategy for improving U.S. productivity and competitiveness in today's global economy.

Here labor's interests are synonymous with the public interest and the requirements of the new economy. Here labor's demands reflect the new demands of today's families, and echo the widespread cultural yearning for stronger families. To establish the pro-family workplace as a new national norm in both the public and private sectors is surely a worthy goal for the American labor movement — one that could help turn decline into renaissance as we approach the 1990s. ●

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a public policy organization based in New York that is concerned with family issues.



HUCK / Impact Visuals

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

Jackson, Mississippi

The Clarion-Ledger Jackson Daily News

November 22, 1987 • Sunday

Candidates must embrace family policy in campaign

Editor's Note: "This Corner" is a column airing the perspectives of knowledgeable Mississippians on topics of public interest and concern. Today's topic, family values and public policy, is by David G. Blankenhorn III, a native of Jackson, who is director of the Institute for American Values in New York, N.Y. He will present a lecture on this subject at 2 p.m. Monday at the student union at Jackson State University.

■

By DAVID G. BLANKENHORN III
Special to The Clarion-Ledger/Jackson Daily News

Will one of the 1988 presidential aspirants become the electoral equivalent of Bill Cosby — the pro-family candidate? The first to lay claim to such a mantle could quickly attract a powerful following, which in turn might provide the key to the White House. Americans today increasingly sense that society's most important institution, the family, is in trouble. Popular television programs such as *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties* clearly reflect a yearning for stronger families and a new cultural tilt toward family values.

BLANKENHORN

This cultural revival of the family may, in 1988, become a political revival as well. Already, candidates are beginning to stake their claims. Democrats are focusing on children's issues such as day care and child poverty. Republicans have charged that the federal tax code penalizes mothers who stay at home with children. Candidates from both parties stress how welfare reform will strengthen families. Educational reform, as well, has become a priority for all the candidates.

Yet surprisingly, what might be called a national family agenda still awaits its political champion. It's as if each candidate can hum several notes, but no one can yet sing the song. They all have issues, but no one yet has a compelling message.

Thus the first candidate who fashions an appeal for stronger families as a top national priority — the social policy cornerstone of the next administration — will find a distinguishing and powerful new theme. Such a program could cut across ideological lines and involve millions of Americans in ways that most other issues simply do not.

Any presidential aspirant seeking the "family vote" should begin with pro-family tax reform that offers targeted relief to families rearing children. It could be done by raising the child exemption in the tax code to $5,000, up from $2,000 under current law. (Last year's tax reform raised the exemption from $1,080.) If phased out for the wealthy and made refundable for the poor, such a "family tax credit" would boost real income by about $750 per child for the majority of American families who have suffered an economic squeeze over the past 15 years.

Such a credit would embody our belief that rearing children is more than a series of costly private choices. It is a social imperative that should be supported by public policy. Yet the "family tax credit" also would preserve private choice, helping some families afford child care while also helping those parents who wish to stay at home with their children.

A second theme should be "pro-family work place." Today's parents need flexible policies that help them harmonize the demands of family and work — policies that permit them to be better parents. Both public and corporate initiatives should encourage parental leaves for childbirth, job sharing, flexible work hours, and on-site or nearby child care. Such ideas are rooted in the new realities of the work place and family, yet their guiding purpose is quite traditional: to allow parents more time with their children.

Another theme would replace the current welfare system with a new program to promote family stability and economic independence. Instead of welfare benefits, the program would offer a guaranteed job, including child care, for all able-bodied recipients. In addition, stronger child support laws would require non-custodial parents, usually fathers, to assume more financial responsibility for their children.

Liberals and conservatives increasingly agree that the current welfare system fosters dependency, encourages family breakdown and subsidizes teen pregnancies. Substituting jobs for benefits, while costly, would offer recipients a genuine ladder out of poverty without the disincentives to work and family formation that plague the current system. Stricter child support payments not only would help mothers and children, but also, in the case of teenagers, create strong reasons for boys not to make babies before they are ready to become fathers.

A final theme should emphasize the importance of teaching values in our schools. As cultural norms changed over the past 25 years, and as school populations became more diverse, schools became reluctant to teach what used to be called "character development" and "citizenship" — moral values such as honesty, respect for others and for the law, the link between effort and reward, and the benefits and responsibilities of living in a democracy. Yet silence or neutrality regarding these values is surley the wrong lesson to teach children.

Teaching what has been called "moral literacy" will, of course, be a complex issue, requiring distinctions between basic values and narrow orthodoxies, between the importance of cultural tolerance and the danger of moral agnosticism. But it need not be a partisan political issue. Recent Gallup and Harris polls show strong agreement and remarkable good sense among parents on the values they want taught, as well as a broad consensus that schools should do a better job. So long as "teaching values" does not become a code for imposing religious or political views on young minds, it will attract bipartisan national support precisely because it reinforces popular family values.

These four themes suggest a national family agenda that is neither liberal nor conservative, Republican nor Democratic. It confronts the core issues facing the American family and will fit the strategic needs of either party. Thus it is twice blessed: good policy and good politics. Which of the candidates will embrace it?

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1988

Television's Modern Morality Plays

Your television critic Martha Bayles ("Holidays and the Huxtables," Dec. 14) writes that "TV barrages us with so many seemingly perfect families that we end up feeling depressed about our own." Nonsense. Programs like "The Cosby Show" and "Family Ties" are popular precisely because they convey a message that Americans today want to hear: Families matter. They reflect our desire for stronger families and a new cultural tilt toward family values.

Of course the Huxtables and Keatons are "idealized" families. In a sense, these programs are morality plays more than descriptions of "real life." But what is wrong with a few shows like that? Isn't it legitimate to see in fiction and art not only who we are, but who we want to be? Must TV always portray families as oppressive, alienating institutions in order to pass some reality test? Judging from the ratings, viewers don't seem to think so.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
Executive Director
Institute For American Values
New York

Roanoke Times & World-News FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 1988

OFTEN INVOKED, SELDOM DEFINED

Just what are 'family values'?

By DAVID BLANKENHORN

"FAMILY VALUES" is surely one of the most potent cultural and political phrases of the past decade. But while "family values" are often invoked, they are less frequently defined. Imprecision has its advantages. Yet too often this powerful phrase has become, as Thomas Jefferson said of patriotism, the last refuge of scoundrels — those who would use "family values" as convenient political buzz-words, or as an ideological Trojan Horse to disguise narrower, more partisan objectives.

Are there widely shared moral beliefs in America that can properly be described as "family values?" Can consensual norms about family be reflected in, and reinforcd by, public policy? Or, in our pluralistic and often culturally divided society, is the very notion of shared family norms simply an anachronism?

Certainly, few societies celebrate diversity and tolerance as much as ours does. Our ethos of individualism, deeply embedded in our culture, generates skepticism toward any attempt, especially by government, to jduge or restrict individual behavior. Moreover, since private behavior can never conform fully to idealized social norms, an influential current of opinion today, especially within elite culture, views any set of unambiguous norms with suspicion, fearing them to be oppressive and overly judgmental. In historical terms, this belief that norms themselves are the problem — that the best cultural ethos regarding the family is one of moral agnosticism — is unprecedented, even as a significant minority view.

Yet with exceptions and cautions noted, surely there exist in our society some broadly shared "family values" of deep social importance. And surely people interested in family policy should understand and debate these values — not in order to legislate or police them, but simply in order to know whether a proposed family policy is supportive of them or undermines them. In this spirit, I propose some beginning definitions.

We value families. The family is society's primary institution for raising chidren, caring for the elderly, and passing on and developing the values of society. It is usually the source of both our greatest loves and our greatest sorrows. It is the main mediating institution between the individual and the state — the basic social unit of our culture. For these reasons, most of us see the family as our central and most enduring commitment beyond the self.

We value marriage. The marital commitment is a foundation of strong families. While divorce may be the least bad alternative for a damaged marriage, today's high divorce rate is a troubling sign for families. We value marriage as an equal partnership, based on shared commitment, compromise and responsibility, not domination or inequality.

We value children. We see in children our hopes for the future. While recognizing the primary responsibility of parents in child rearing, we also affirm that raising children is more than a series of private choices — it is also a social imperative that should be supported by other social institutions, by the workplace, and by public policy.

We value parents. Parents are a child's first and most influential teachers, and a child's major providers of love, guidance and protection. The parental role is socially invaluable and irreplaceable; it should be honored and supported by society. Parenthood is a serious responsibility that should not be entered into lightly or casually. While many divorced or widowed parents are admirably successful ones, few would deny that the duties of parenthood are best met by two parents working together in marriage. Bringing a child into the world outside of marriage, or when parents are too young or unprepared to be real parents, is almost always personally and socially harmful.

We value our elders. Caring for our elders is one of the family's most important functions — one that should be facilitated and encouraged by other social institutions and by public policy. Moreover, we recognize the unique contributions elders can make: to the economy, in child care and teaching, and to our broader cultural life.

We value community. Institutions that make up community life — the school, the church, the synagogue, the workplace association, the service and charitable organization — are enriched by strong families. The institutions of community also enrich family life by extending our concerns beyond the family to the broader society.

We affirm basic moral values as part of the heritage we received from our parents and will develop and pass on to our children. These values of character and citizenship include honesty, the "golden rule," respect for others and for the law, the link between effort and reward, and the benefits and responsibilities of living in a democracy. Other institutions, from schools to the media, should support and reinforce parental efforts to teach and pass on basic values.

We see the need for societal concern, reflected in public- and private-sector policies, that will strengthen all families, empowering them to realize and build upon these family values that form a cornerstone of our culture.

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based organization that distributed this article.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 1988

Conservatives, Liberals to Work Together to Study Family Problems

BY CHRIS CORCORAN
New York City Tribune Staff

A newly formed think-tank hopes to help conservatives and liberals find common ground in the controversial area of family-related issues and values.

While they still tend to draw battle lines over the particulars of how a certain policy might be implemented, both liberals and conservatives recognize the need to unite around issues such as welfare reform, child care, maternity leave and tax reform.

The new think-tank, called the Institute for American Values, was officially founded here in the City last week and is headed by 1977 Harvard graduate David Blankenhorn.

The institute's founding conference was convened at the Harvard Club, on West 44th Street in Manhattan, last Thursday to announce its agenda and begin dialogue after 2 years of planning.

Blankenhorn, who is married, completed a master's degree in labor history at Warwick University in England and has previously worked in the public policy field for the citizen's action groups Massachusetts Fair Share and Virginia Action.

The institute lists as its principal purpose "to deliver timely and useful research on family issues to policymakers in government, decisionmakers in the private sector and opinionmakers in the media."

Some of the primary concerns of the institute include how the workplace, taxes, child care, education and poverty affect the family unit.

While careful not to define the nature of the family unit, Blankenhorn said, "The evidence is clear that the status and future of the American family has emerged as a resonant concern ... and leading family indicators ... are often painting a troubled portrait of today's family."

"Today we are calling for the emergence of a national family agenda ... as a cornerstone of public policy for the

see FAMILY pg 6

FAMILY from page 1

1990s," he said.

Blankenhorn went on to describe what he called the "often sterile debate" on family issues between the political left and right, a split which he says clouds the issues and impedes progress.

Policies, whether they are formulated in the workplace or in the government, must address the central issue of working to make the family unit stronger, he believes. This perspective, he added, must buck the strong tendency in American society to speak primarily to individual rather than family concerns.

Creating flexible working hours, better maternity leaves and company operated day-care centers were some of the topics addressed during the morning session on the pro-family workplace.

One problem that surfaced during the session revolved around how to effectively address the needs of the average worker or homemaker through policies that are, at least in the workplace, often shaped by a financially better-off management.

The speeches were all from the corporate executives' viewpoint, owing perhaps to the fact that several corporations were major founding sponsors of the institute.

The various speeches prompted one labor leader to openly question the value of their presentations.

"Managers often have their own cars, can leave work more easily if a child-related problem arises which they must attend to and they have more resources with which to solve their child-care problems," said the labor representative.

A problem related to financial concerns and the future of the institue was raised by Douglas J. Besharov of the American Enterprise institute.

He presented data on the comparatively low income of the majority of families with pre-school children in the United States, figures which he felt were not properly appreciated by the seemingly urban and affluent conference participants.

Besharov went on to criticize government as being more interested in providing major child-care subsidies for affluent families where both parents work than it is in providing money for the often poorer family in which only one parent works.

During the same session, Dr. Edward F. Zigler, an expert in child care and founder of the Headstart program, said the child-care problem in the United States could be solved through institinstitutionalization, with schools opened for toddlers during the day and for school-age youngsters in the late afternoon if their parents are still at work.

Initially, the government would have to fund the opening of the schools but in a few years tuition would enable them to become financially self-sufficient and inexpensive, he argued.

The final session of the conference focused on the family agenda for the 1990s. While no clear consensus emerged among the three speakers, two important points were noted by Blankenhorn.

The first was that policies must equally address the concerns of families where both parents work outside the home, and of families where only one parent works. And secondly, he said, was the agreement that both government policies and the cultural climate of society are of equal importance in supporting families.

"Conservatives tend to see the family as one parent working outside the home and they tend to stress values over government intervention," said Blankenhorn, while liberals, he added, tend to stress government solutions to problems and seek subsidies for families where two parents work.

"Both sides had a general agreement that marriage and children are good and positive things for society," said Blankenhorn.

The institute has several symposiums planned for the upcoming year, which are likely to focus on child care and pro-family workplace issues, according to institute spokesman Ivan Sacks.

HOME & FAMILY

PETER CUNNINGHAM

'Successful companies respond to brainpower *and* hearts of workers.'– Rita Wilson

Family-friendly corporations

They help balance demands of home and work

By Marilyn Gardner
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

New York

RITA WILSON, a vice president at Allstate Insurance Company, likes to think expansively.

Instead of seeing the Northbrook, Ill., company as an employer of 55,000 workers, she imagines a group twice that size.

"The people we employ are not the only people we affect," Mrs. Wilson explains. "We affect at least two times that number because of the way the quality of work life affects families."

Wilson's attitude reflects a new corporate philosophy slowly gaining favor in board rooms across the country: the pro-family workplace. As dual-career couples and women with children make up an increasingly large part of the work force, Wilson and other executives see an inescapable obligation to help employees balance the demands of work and home.

The shift to more inclusive policies is not totally altruistic. A shrinking labor pool, combined with a continuing influx of women into the work force, will make the labor market increasingly competitive in the 1990s, according to United States Department of Labor projections.

Wilson outlines the challenges facing employers in the 1990s. Speaking to a group of 150 policymakers, analysts, and business leaders attending the founding conference of the Institute for American Values she warned, "It will be foolhardy to think that benefits packages as we know them today, as good and competitive as they are, will be adequate in the future."

Instead, she says, companies will need to offer perks such as child care, elder care, at-home work, and flexible hours to remain competitive.

Identifying policies that create a "family-friendly" workplace is one of the tasks of the new institute, a nonpartisan group founded, according to executive director David Blankenhorn, "to answer one simple question: How can public and private-sector policies strengthen families?"

That question may be anything but simple. In Congress, a parental-leave bill, guaranteeing unpaid leave for parents of newborn or seriously ill children, appears to be stalled. And in corporations, executive concerns about productivity and cost often prevent serious discussions of policy changes. Too many managers, Wilson finds, continue to view employees as "a cost to be controlled rather than an asset to be used."

As one way of countering that attitude, Marie McKee, director of executive personnel planning for Corning Glass, urges employers to think in terms of two kinds of customers: "internal" and "external."

" 'Internal' customers – employees – become a very large group of people you must serve," she explains.

At Corning, serving "internal" customers includes providing on-site child care and offering a child-care referral service. The company is also implementing a "more aggressive" part-time work policy to identify part-time jobs and convince managers that this makes good business sense. "You always get more than part-time work out of people," Ms. McKee observes.

In addition, the company has assembled a career and family book for supervisors and employees, outlining family-support policies.

Still, any policy is only as good as the support it receives from management. "The real story at Corning is a commitment at the top," McKee says proudly. "We have a chairman who is committed to the retention of women."

But retaining women is only part of the solution. Benefits must include men, McKee adds, and male workers "must get support from other men for doing more parenting."

To executives worried about the cost of offering broader-based policies, J. Douglas Phillips, senior director of corporate planning at Merck and Co., offers an example. Merck's child-care leave policy, he says, has resulted in savings.

Mr. Phillips estimates the cost of losing an employee at $50,000. But by permitting a worker to take a six-month child-care leave (cost: $38,000), the company achieves a net improvement of $12,000, he says. "When you focus on people, profits will follow," Phillips comments, quoting the company's founder.

Speaking broadly of "family-friendly" benefits, Wilson says, "The successful companies of the future will respond both to the brainpower and the hearts of their workers."

Dr. Ethel Klein, professor of political science at Columbia University, puts it another way: "The family is an institution that is valuable enough to make accommodations for, rather than always asking the family to make the sacrifices."

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

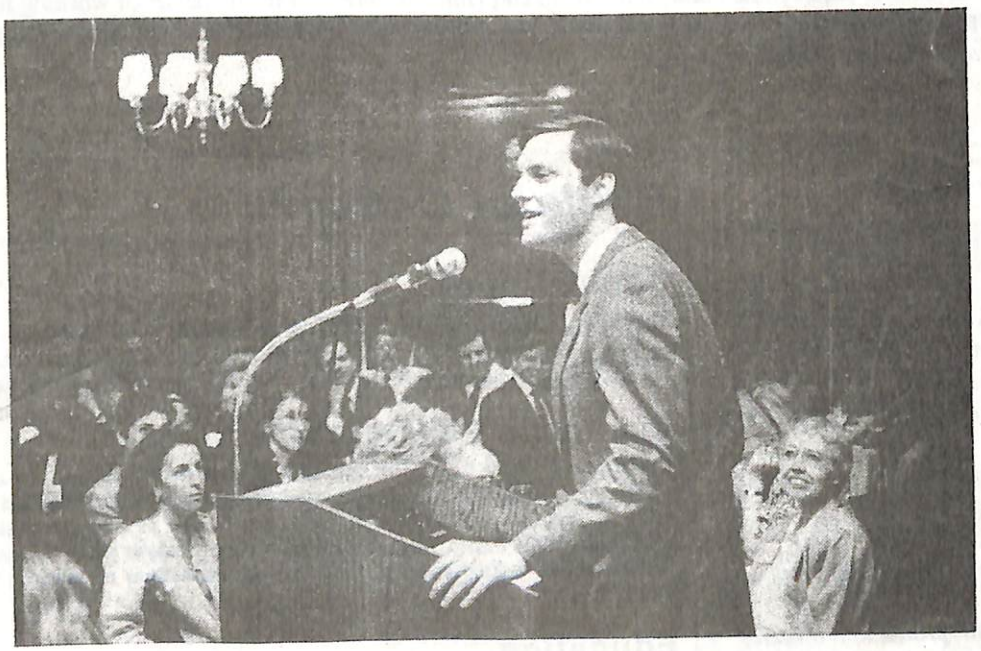
American Family

The National Magazine on Family Policy and Programs Since 1977

Volume 11 August 1988 Number 7

The Relationship of Public Policy to Family Well-Being

by David Blankenhorn



David Blankenhorn, executive director of the Institute for American Values

Also in this issue:

A Citizen's Workplace for the New Workforce
by Karen Baehler

Reducing Academic Risks In Inner-City Classrooms
by Judith J. Carta and Charles R. Greenwood

Introducing the Institute for American Values

The Relationship of Public Policy to Family Well-Being

by David Blankenhorn

Let me start with something that I think we'll all agree on: that the time is right to bring family issues into the mainstream of the national policy debate.

The evidence abounds from every corner of our culture — whether looking at the opinion polls, the debates in statehouses and in Congress, popular television shows such as "The Cosby Show" and "Family Ties," or changing practices in the workplace — the status and future of the American family has emerged as a culturally resonant, politically potent theme and will continue to do so in the 1990s.

It's almost as if we can palpably feel a kind of cultural yearning for stronger families and the need to pay attention to the status and future of the family unit. We are very much concerned with leading economic indicators to measure the health of our economy, but I think that we are beginning to see a feeling that there are such things as "leading family indicators." Those family indicators are often painting a troubling portrait of today's families, and there's a feeling that we need to rededicate and refocus, rethink and strengthen this basic family unit.

This condition, which we've seen emerge over the last several years, has produced a change in attitude toward family policy. It offers hope for the emergence of what I would call "A National Family Agenda," by which I mean a coherent message about stronger families as our top domestic priority, as a cornerstone of public policy and private initiative in the 1990s, and a widely shared sense of the importance of strengthening the family unit and an idea of how we might move in the 1990s to do that.

Sterile Debate

That's the good and hopeful news. There's also less good news. The current debate on family issues, particularly at the national level is a sterile and fruitless debate at times. All too often the national dialogue on family issues is unfocused, is adrift, is not strong, not rigorous. In particular, I want to suggest that our vision of stronger families and our method of thinking about family policy is very often impoverished by sterile political categories of left vs. right, and that is holding us back. That's why we see the kind of policy gridlock and paralysis that often emerges and that prevents us from making the kind of policy progress that the times and the demographics and the culture calls for. Certainly on issues that we see before us in the national debate, ranging from the debate currently over child care to issues of child poverty, and in the pace of progress in private sector policies in the workplace, we are seeing a debate that is not equal in rigor and clarity to the needs of the time and the opportunity of the time.

So despite the important work that's being done, despite the achievements and the new opportunities before us, a genuine, broadly felt, bipartisan, national family agenda that is understood and perceived as such by large numbers of people in our country, has not emerged.

What is to be done about this situation? Irving Howe once said, "When intellectuals get frustrated and can't think of anything else to do, they start a journal." And so, perhaps it's true that when policy analysts get frustrated and can't think of anything else to do, they start a think tank. But, in fact, this problem of a polarized and frequently sterile debate in terms of the analysis of family issues, really brings me to what I see is our purpose and our mission here at the Institute. We have tried to build an organization that asks one simple question: How can public and private sector policies strengthen families?

Family Business

At first glance this seems to be a vague and therefore unexceptional question to ask. Let me see if I can be a bit more specific. I don't mean to ask: "How can policy help people?" "How can it make us stronger and healthier and increase the GNP and life expectancy and do all the things necessary to improve our lives?" — which we all want. I mean something more pointed and more particular. I mean, how can policies strengthen families as families? Will a policy help or hinder the family unit as it goes about what might be called family business: to marry, or bring children into the world and rear them as

healthy, productive citizens, to pass on basic social and moral values to the next generation, to care for aged parents and grandparents, and fundamentally, to build and maintain those bonds of affection, nurturance, mutual support and long term commitment that form the familiar, familial context in which most of us will experience both our greatest loves and our greatest sorrows in life and which form the very definition of family life, and the definition, if I might use a very loaded phrase, of family values.

I think that's beginning to hint at family business—business particular to the family as a family. If politicians are seeking a family vote on issues, they have to ask themselves, "How do my policies address those words and that business?" If family analysts and policy analysts want to propose a family policy or a family agenda, we have to ask ourselves how those policies and that agenda relate to those words and that business.

This is not easy to do. It is not easy to do for a couple of reasons. Family business often conflicts with a number of very powerful cultural components. We have a very strong current in the culture, reflected in how we analyze policy, of individualism and of looking at the relationship of individual to state and to policy. But, really, what are families about? Families are largely about purposes beyond the self, purposes which extend an individual only as an individual. On the other hand, we have a strong current in the culture that stresses concern with provisional choices or have a strong current in the culture that stresses concern with provisional choices or lifestyle options. Yet, the family is more principally about givens—life givens, not choices. That's why Robert Frost said, that a "family is someplace where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." It's not a choice, it's a given.

So, secondly I would like to say that this is very tricky, very intensely private business that families do, is not easily or directly influenced by the actions of policy-makers. This is particularly true because we are a pluralistic society which does not support legislating values and rigidly proscribing or prescribing private behavior. It's a very difficult area when you think of the private business of families and how public policy influences, supports, does not support those types of businesses that families do. The best we can do is begin to ask ourselves, "Do our proposals and policies provide a supportive, helpful and empowering context, a framework for family business to thrive and prosper?" That's what I think we mean when we ask how policies strengthen families.

I'm trying to describe what I would call a family first or a family-centered perspective for what we are calling family policy. It may sound redundant, but I think that it is important to try to make some of these distinctions. I believe that if this organization can claim that mantle and assume that task, that we will make an important and distinguishing contribution. I think it's steady work, well worth doing, that can really make a difference and improve the quality of the policy debate.

Let me briefly mention several areas that are examples of where I see a problem or two and where we might need to do some harder thinking.

Bringing Fresh Ideas into the Debate

One area is what I call a kind of ideological Trojan Horse approach to family policy, where expressions of "I'm for Family" are often a kind of packaging, a rhetorical or thematic way to address a very wide range of issues. You needn't look any further than the current presidential candidates who give their speeches about family. Their current position on aid to the Contras, on plant

Institute Brings Fresh Ideas to Family Policy

A new organization with group of dedicated staff, a talented board and coalition-building ideas entered the think tank business this summer with a founding conference in New York City. The Institute for American Values, says executive director David Blankenhorn, will strive to bring family issues into the mainstream of the national policy debate.

The philosophy behind the Institute for American Values is that government should not replace families, or ignore families, but should empower them. How does this apply to government policy? Blankenhorn says a theme of empowerment should be used as a measuring stick by which programs should be examined to see if they help families. In some ways, Blakenhorn already sees consensus occurring. Ten years ago government involvement in child care was seen as distasteful to conservatives. Today conservatives and liberals are struggling to embrace the pro-family label by promoting a range of child care services. Both Michael Dukakis and George Bush have proposed child care bills at a cost of $2 billion. "Demographics drive politics," explains Blankenhorn.

Blankenhorn predicts that the family-sensitive workplace is another issue that will attract support from the left and the right. He sees flexible work schedules, job-sharing, and parental leave as areas where liberals and conservatives may find common ground, again because of demographics. It is predicted that by 1990 at least half of the labor force will be female.

Finally the Institute will strive to be a forum for exploring the difficult subject of "family values." "I don't think its possible to make family policy in a family-neutral way," says Blankenhorn. "It's difficult to come up with a definition of family that is broad enough to encompass different people and different ideas, but not so broad that it loses meaning," he admits. The problem is compounded by the fact that Americans are very reluctant about legislation that gets involved in private matters. Recently the Institute has been reaching out to academics, business leaders and policy-makers through its newsletter, urging them to write in their ideas on the subject of values. Says Blankenhorn, "I think there is more common ground than people think on this subject."

closings, on a wide range of things are clumped together under the label of family policy. That may be wise politically, but it doesn't work analytically and I'm proposing that it is a problem if we clump together such a wide selection of issues. The question should not just be "what's good for people," it has to be "what's good for families"—a narrower definition.

Another problem is the question of: Whose families? Whose families are you talking about? Picture if you will a debate between, say, Rep. Patricia Schroeder, a national leader on family issues, proposing the Family Medical Leave Act—which I am incidentally, very supportive of—and Phyllis Schlafly, the leader of the conservative pro-family movement. What do they say about each other's constituencies?

On the left in response to "What is a family?" you could easily say: "You know those old Ozzie and Harriet families, that Leave it to Beaver model of families—that reminds us of a Norman Rockwell painting. We remember them fondly but there are really not very many of them. In fact, under ten percent of the families today fit that model. Today the reality is the working family and those other families are anachronistic and not centrally relevant to the policy debate."

I'm going to say for Mrs. Schlafly: "The traditional family—mother at home, father the breadwinner, children at home, those are what families are. That's a family. You know who these other people are? Greedy yuppies. Brie eating, white wine- drinking, Volvo-driving, two-earner rich couples that want other people, in particular the government, to pay for their babysitting costs. They're really not families."

Well, perhaps I'm exaggerating a bit, but I honestly don't think I'm exaggerating too much about those other two perspectives. What's happened here? Each perspective has tried to define the other out of existence. Yet, if you look at mothers today, about 40 percent work full time, about 40 percent are not in the labor force at all, about 20 percent are working part-time. So, really, if you split the middle, its roughly equally divided in this country between the traditional families and the working families. Certainly the trend is toward increasing the numbers of mothers in the workforce, but the point that I'm tring to make is that trying to define families as my particular kind of family is very harmful. This polarization, between working families and traditional families, is a harmful polarization as we think about family policy because it turns a discussion of what could be a national concern for strengthening families into a divisive and polarizing thing.

Thirdly, I want to say that there is a particularly sterile argument about the role of government. The traditional argument between left and right has been over the size of government. The conservatives want less, the liberals want more, and that's the perennial argument. The debate regarding families is not really, should government be smaller or larger. What matters is the relationship of public policy to family well-being. What is the distribution of costs and benefits to families and what is the message of public policy about what we value and what we devalue about the importance of family in this society?

I don't see the debate in terms of big government versus small government. On the one hand, our bias is that government, no matter how effective and how important and how necessary, can never, never substitute for strong families. Our bias, if we want to reinvest and strengthen families, has to be through families, not simply through government programs as a replacement for what we see as family failure. Bernice Weissbourd and other people in the family resource movement have been very powerful in stressing why it is important to use the tools of government to "build on family strengths"

Secondly, if government can never substitute for families, it is also true that we see a positive role for government, not to replace families, but to strengthen and empower them. Traditional liberalism has often said: Look what the government can do for you. Traditional conservatism has generally said: Look what the government is doing to you. I say, from the perspective of family strengthening, we need to say neither one of those two things. We need to say: We want to use the tools of government affirmatively, not to replace families but to increase opportunities for families to be strong and healthy units. We need to get away from that kind of big government/ small government debate.

Let me conclude just by saying that this approach, or the application of this set of questions to family issues, that I have been trying to suggest here, if taken seriously and rigorously, and pursued with the tools of research and public policy organizations will produce some real surprises. It will do some things that aren't really being done very often. It will shake up some of the settled orthodoxies in the public policy debate, and I think it's a very important contribution that can be made. To borrow the words of the poet: "We will be seeking not the old, smooth prizes, we will be seeking rough, new prizes." That's what this set of questions can help us do.

So finally, despite the fact that we are such a new organization in our infancy, despite the challenges we can foresee and those challenges at this point we can't foresee, I am fundamentally optimistic and hopeful because of the people in this room. Because of the work they are doing—in the workplace, in management, in labor, in academia, in the service provision community, in the family support movement. This is very, very important work and it is such an honor for me to be able to establish this kind of relationship with people of this talent, commitment, achievement and reputation. And so for the reason of colleagueship with you, I am very hopeful about this organization. What we will achieve in the future will not be possible without the work that you are doing and without the way that we can go together. So I ask you to let us travel this road together in the days and months ahead, not confident that we know every answer, but confident indeed, in our minds and in our hearts, that we know the important question. Thank you.

David Blankenhorn spoke at a luncheon address on behalf of the Institute for American Values on June 9. Blankenhorn is currently the executive director of the Institute. The Institute for American Values is a non-profit, non-patisan organization and is located at 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2415, New York, NY 10107; (212) 246-3942.

Los Angeles Herald Examiner Sunday, August 28, 1988

All in the family?

Bush, Dukakis spawn rhetoric, but sputter on realistic ideas

By David Blankenhorn

Who would have predicted, even a few months ago, that George Bush and Michael Dukakis would today be waging much of their battle for the presidency on the issue of child care? Or that speaker after speaker at both conventions would deliver an ode to the American family and a pledge of allegiance to family values? Why is every politician with access to a pollster and a microphone suddenly intent on becoming the electoral equivalent of Bill Cosby — the pro-family candidate?

The reason is simple. Americans increasingly sense that the family, society's most important institution, is in trouble. The candidates quite correctly detect in the electorate a yearning for stronger families and a new cultural tilt toward family values. Evidence abounds in every corner of our society — from opinion polls, to debates in statehouses and in Congress, to popular television shows such as "The Cosby Show" and "Family Ties," to changing practices in the workplace — that the status and future of the American family have emerged as culturally resonant and politically potent themes for millions of voters.

And not only for voters in general but for particular blocs of voters each party views as crucial to its campaign strategy. Bush, told that women voters aren't crazy about him, tries to woo them by promising to deliver on a $2.2 billion child-care plan. Similarly, Dukakis, told that Reagan Democrats are crucial to his chances in November, touts parental leave and child support to entice them home.

This beginning of a national debate on family issues may be the central social-policy fact of the 1988 elections. It offers hope for the emergence of what might be called a national family agenda — a coherent and broadly shared commitment to stronger families as our top domestic priority in the 1990s. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the family debate remains weak and unfocused. Each tosses out a few answers, but neither understands the basic question.

To Bush and Dukakis, that question is: How can public policy help people? One result is that both mistake kitchen-table chitchat — How are the kids doing in school? Can we afford a new house or car or vacation? How are things at work? — as the family issues. Such vague definitions allow them to use family rhetoric as feel-good packaging for whatever suits their purpose at the moment.

Accordingly, Dukakis, in a July speech billed as his statement on the family, simply rounded up the usual suspects: plant-closing legislation, drugs and good jobs at good wages. The vice president's new family-policy statement throws in housing, health care and economic development.

Certainly, these issues are important. But unless family is nothing more than a metaphor — a political Rorschach test to be used by every politician with an agenda to peddle — it's hard to see what binds the proposals together as family policy.

Thus, the basic question must be redefined. It is not: How can we help people as individuals? Rather, it is: How can we strengthen families as families? How will our policies help or hinder the family unit as it goes about what might be called family business? To marry. To bring children into the world and raise them to be productive citizens. To pass on basic social and moral values to the next generation. To care for aged parents and grandparents. And, most fundamentally, to build and maintain those bonds of long-term affection, nurture and mutual support that constitute the very definition of family life.

If Dukakis and Bush seek to propose family policy, as opposed to random good ideas, they must begin with precisely such family business. If they do, they will find that this more focused challenge is also a more difficult one, for several reasons.

First, it may at times conflict with powerful currents in our culture. Our society celebrates individualism and choice. But family is less about choice or lifestyle options than it is about commit-

ments and givens. That's why Robert Frost defined family as the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.

Second, family business is mostly private business. It is not easily or directly influenced by the actions of policy-makers — especially in our pluralistic society, which does not often legislate values or regulate private behavior. Frequently, the best that policy-makers can do, besides refraining from doing harm, is simply to foster a supportive empowering environment in which family business can thrive and prosper.

There are deeper problems. Too often, the dialogue on how to strengthen families degenerates into a sterile ideological and special-interest battle pitting one family type against another.

Republicans champion what they term traditional families. Democrats favor what they call working families. Each party seeks special treatment for its favored group. (This explains much of the Bush-Dukakis divergence on child-care policy.) Each side tries to denigrate the other group and even define it out of existence.

That's why liberal Democrats are fond of asserting that the old "Leave It to Beaver" family — Dad as breadwinner, Mom as homemaker — is virtually extinct and certainly irrelevant to today's policy agenda. It's also why conservative Republicans love to contrast real (traditional) families with Volvo-driving, two-career Yuppies who want other people to subsidize their child care.

The facts undercut both stereotypes. Of all mothers with children under age 18, about 40 percent work full time, 40 percent are not in the paid labor force and 20 percent work part time. Of all families with preschool children, the numbers of traditional families (Mom at home) and working families (Mom and Dad work full time) are virtually equal. Thus, no family agenda worthy of the name can ignore either those parents in the paid labor force, or those who work as homemakers, or those who straddle both worlds.

Another ideological quagmire for family-policy concerns is the role and size of government. An important strain of conservative thought, evident in most Republican pronouncements on family policy, holds that government itself is always the enemy — it never reduces problems, but instead, always makes them worse. Democrats frequently turn this view of government on its head, looking instinctively to government, rather than to families themselves, to solve problems that are largely the result of family breakdown.

But the left vs. right argument simply clouds the issue. It's not size that matters, it's the impact on the family — whether specific policies promote or hinder family well-being. Those who favor activist government must recognize that substituting government functions for family functions will not strengthen families. At the same time, pro-family government is not do-nothing government. The tools of government can and should be used to empower and support family business. So far, neither Republicans nor Democrats seem prepared to revisit this old debate from a family perspective.

Republicans champion what they term traditional families. Democrats favor what they call working families. Each party seeks special treatment for its own favored group.

Here are a a few ideas on how to achieve that:

- ▶ Establish the pro-family workplace — child-care assistance, flexible work hours and benefits packages, maternity and paternity leaves, job-sharing and part-time options — as a new national norm in both the public and private sectors.
- ▶ Reform the tax code to help families with young children. For example, increase the dependent exemption for young children and double it during the year of birth or adoption.
- ▶ Toughen child-support requirements for non-custodial parents, usually fathers, who leave their families.
- ▶ Recognize children in poverty as a tragedy closely linked to family breakdown, requiring not only new investments in nutrition, education and health care, but also public and moral leadership to discourage unwed parenthood and promote strong families.

The 1988 family debate, though growing rapidly in volume, still lacks its own voice. Both Republican and Democratic efforts to address family issues remain enfeebled by common enemies — emphasis on imagery, special-interest pleading, ideological straitjackets. Our national family agenda, with all its urgency and appeal, still awaits its political champion. ■

David Blankenhorn is director of the Institute for American Values, a policy organization in New York concerned with family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

vision even a few years ago, where often families were seen as basically sort of oppressive and inept—something that you needed to escape from. I think the popularity of these newer shows reflects a cultural yearning for stronger families.

"Yet these shows have been criticized by many for portraying idealized families that don't reflect the reality of the day. I don't believe that; I believe that is a completely wrongheaded analysis. Admittedly, most families—white or black—are not as affluent as the Huxtables of *The Cosby Show;* admittedly, most families are not as conflict-free; admittedly, most families don't have invisible fairies who come in and make the house beautiful without any apparent effort being exerted by any of the family members—but that doesn't bother me. To me it's the message of the show that is important, which is that families matter, families are good.

"Would the critics' frustration be assuaged if we just showed everybody unhappy all the time and depicted family life as a cauldron of conflict? Would that make people feel better? I'm baffled at why it's a bad idea to have some shows that present families in a good way.

"On the negative side, I'm concerned about what I would call this kind of cynical and uninspired exploitation of sexuality on television.

"I was visiting friends in Chicago recently and watched an episode of *Cheers* in which the premise was that Sam had made a promise for some reason that he wouldn't have sex for three weeks—and the whole story was how hard this was for him. A lot of the humor was very overtly sexual—about male arousal and the temptation of this guy who could think 24 hours a day about nothing else besides, 'I'm so miserable because I can't have sex right now.'

"I don't want to sound like a prude here, because I'm not. There were some funny lines in the show. But when it was over, we turned to one another and said, 'We like to think of ourselves as sophisticated, not uptight—would we want children to watch this?' And we all were surprised to find ourselves saying that we would absolutely not want children to watch this show, which was on at 8 o'clock on a Thursday night (in the Central Time Zone). Because the message of that show was absolutely a violation of the basic values that we had. It was a cynically false portrayal of reality and such a misrepresentation of what sexual attraction is all about and what it means to people. The only voice on behalf of anything other than immediate self-gratification came from a priest, and he was ridiculed.

"That's just one example. I see a general decline in the sense of responsibility that the networks and producers are supposed to have to the public, rather than to short-term commercial success at the expense of any other consideration."

LEE MARGULIES is a writer and editor at the Los Angeles Times.

Raina Sacks

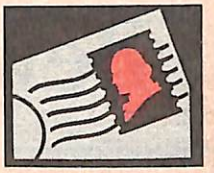
DAVID BLANKENHORN *is executive director of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based organization concerned with family issues.*

"The shift I've noticed is that a few shows, particularly *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show,* now portray families as good places to be, where people care for one another and find purposes larger than themselves. That's different from what you saw on tele-

WINTER 1988 *Volume 10 Number 4*

Television&Families
The Quarterly of the National Council for Families & Television

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR Tuesday, March 7, 1989



Day-care credits

The editorial "A Fast Start for Child-Care Bills," Feb. 1, states that "Mr. Bush's preference, like that of many congressional Republicans, is a more generous tax credit for parents who use day-care services."

Technically this is true, but it misses the basic point. President Bush, like most other Republicans and some Democrats, wants to increase tax credits for *all* lower-income families with young children – both the roughly 50 percent who do not use day-care services and the other half who do. The crucial distinction – which this editorial obscures – is targeting benefits to parents according to income, not the labor-force status of the mother.

David Blankenhorn ***New York***
President ***Institute for American Values***

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER Friday, June 16, 1989

Traditional families do count

BY DAVID BLANKENHORN
The Washington Post

What is today's most-repeated statistic about the American family? Surely it is that "fewer than 10% of families today fit the old 'Ozzie and Harriet' model of homemaker mother and breadwinner father." Who has not encountered this phrase — sometimes with *Leave it to Beaver* or "Norman Rockwell" as the preferred metaphor — countless times?

Rep. Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, whose new book is titled *Champion of the Great American Family,* repeats it almost daily in speeches, press releases and television interviews. Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, who chairs the Senate subcommittee on families and children, cites it regularly as an argument for his new child-care proposal.

Yet this dramatic statistic suffers from one defect. It ain't true. In fact, it is a false and pernicious claim — mathematically false, since the numbers don't add up, and socially pernicious, since it seeks to help one type of family by belittling another.

Unsupported claim

The 10-percenters use this statistic, to paraphrase Mark Twain, like a drunk uses a lamp post: more for support than illumination. They seek to label "traditional" families as anachronistic and virtually extinct, replaced by modern "working" families. But evidence from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose data on families are widely regarded as the nation's most comprehensive and reliable, does not support this claim.

More than one-third of all families with preschool children are "Ozzie and Harriets": homemaker mothers married to breadwinner fathers. They comprise the nation's largest single category of families with young children. Among all mothers with preschoolers, well over half are either not employed at all or employed only part time. So despite the marked trend toward maternal employment and family diversity in recent decades, the less-than-10% claim simply does not reflect reality.

If we count not just families with preschoolers, but all families with children under age 18, the basic picture does not change. While 44% of these mothers work full-time, fully 35% are not in the labor force at all. Among married mothers in this category, only one-third are employed full time, year-round.

> "They comprise the nation's largest single category of families with young children."

Of course, these numbers, like all numbers, can be cooked to taste. The 10-percenters use two techniques. First they boost the number of "working" families by merging full-time and part-time maternal employment into one category of "working." They do this despite basic differences between the two types of employment, which relate directly to child rearing and family. Thus millions of mothers whose primary occupation is at-home child rearing, but who hold a job for some part of the week or year, are suddenly redefined as primarily "working" parents.

The second cooking technique for shrinking the percentage of "traditional" families is even more distorting. It simply shifts the basis of comparison — not once, but twice. The logical way to measure the prevalence of "traditional" child rearing is to compare traditional families to other families with children. If we instead compare them to all other families, with or without children, we arbitrarily swell the "non-traditional" ranks with millions of newlyweds and empty-nesters. The 10-percenters do this, then go even further: They measure them against the combined weight of every single household in the nation.

The key is to count what the Census Bureau terms "non-family" households — those that lack at least two residents related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption. Examples include widowed or single seniors, students rooming together, unmarried adults living alone or together, and myriad others. Of course, trends in all these types of household units can tell you interesting things about how America is changing demographically, but they shed no useful light on the circumstances in which most children are reared today in the United States.

Thus America in 1987 contained 89.5 million total households, according to the Census Bureau. But only 8.9 million of these were "traditional" families: those with dependent children, homemaker mothers and breadwinner fathers. That's a little more than 9.9% — just small enough to edge under the 10% line. Yet ironically, if we use this method of calculation, we find that "traditional families" were less than one-third of all households even in the "traditional" 1950s!

So it is fairly simple, then, to shrink the traditional group from 33.3% — the largest group — into a quaint and negligible-sounding "fewer than 10%." The trick is either not understanding, or not caring about, basic demographic differences among families, or even about the distinction between families and non-family households.

A diversity of families

But is all this more than a statistical quibble? Yes. We are a diverse nation. We have different types of families. Many parents today, including many mothers of young children, work outside the home in full-time jobs. They deserve support — new policies from both government and employers to help them balance the demands of family and work. National leaders, including Schroeder and Dodd, now champion their cause.

But all families deserve support, not just some. Parents who stay at home with children are not bad, or quaint or even unusual. The 10% message tells them they are. It tells them they are old-fashioned, outmoded, irrelevant. It tells millions of families that they hardly exist as a force in the society. It turns the nation's family policy debate — which should focus on strengthening all families — into special interest pleading that needlessly pits one type of family against another. One small step would begin the journey toward correcting this unfairness. The nation's two most prominent and frequent proponents of the under-10% idea should simply stop repeating it.

David Blankenhorn is president of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based policy group concerned with family issues.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune

June 20, 1989

Ozzie and Harriet aren't an extinct species yet

By David Blankenhorn

New York

What is today's most-repeated statistic about the American family? Surely it is that "fewer than 10 percent of families today fit the old 'Ozzie and Harriet' model of homemaker mother and breadwinner father." Who has not encountered this phrase — sometimes with "Leave it to Beaver" or "Norman Rockwell" as the preferred metaphor — countless times in newspapers and on television?

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., whose new book is titled "Champion of the Great American Family," repeats it almost daily in speeches, press releases and television interviews. Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., who chairs the Senate subcommittee on families and children, cites it regularly as an argument for his new child-care proposal.

Yet this dramatic statistic suffers from one defect. It ain't true. In fact, it is a false and pernicious claim — mathematically false, since the numbers don't add up, and socially pernicious, since it seeks to help one type of family by belittling another.

The 10-percenters use this statistic, to paraphrase Mark Twain, the way a drunk uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination. They seek to label "traditional" families as anachronistic and virtually extinct, replaced by modern "working" families. But evidence from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, whose data on families are widely regarded as the nation's most comprehensive and reliable, does not support this claim.

More than one-third of all families with preschool children are "Ozzie and Harriets": homemaker mothers married to breadwinner fathers. They constitute the nation's largest single category of families with young children. Among all mothers with preschoolers, well over half are either not employed at all or employed only part time. So despite the marked trend toward maternal employment and family diversity in recent decades, the less-than-10-percent claim simply does not reflect reality.

If we count not just families with preschoolers, but all families with children under age 18, the basic picture does not change. While 44 percent of these mothers work full time, fully 35 percent are not in the labor force at all. Among married mothers in this category, only one-third are employed full time, year-round.

Of course these numbers, like all numbers, can be cooked to taste. The 10-percenters use two techniques. First they boost the number of "working" families by merging full-time and part-time maternal employment into one category of "working." They do this despite basic differences between the two types of employment, which relate directly to child rearing and family. Thus millions of mothers whose primary occupation is at-home child rearing, but who hold a job for some part of the week or year, are suddenly redefined as primarily "working" parents. That helps diminish the apparent importance of stay-at-home mothers, but it is far from enough to sustain the 10-percenters' claim.

The second cooking technique for shrinking the percentage of "traditional" families is even more distorting. It simply shifts the basis of comparison — not once, but twice. The logical way to measure the prevalence of "traditional" child rearing is to compare traditional families to other families with children. If we instead compare them to all other families, with or without children, we arbitrarily swell the "nontraditional" ranks with millions of newlyweds and empty-nesters. The 10-percenters do this, then go even further: They measure "Ozzie and Harriet" against the combined weight of every single household in the nation.

The key is to count what the Census Bureau terms "nonfamily" households — those that lack at least two residents related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption. Examples include widowed or single seniors, students rooming together, unmarried adults living alone or together, and myriad others. Of course, trends in all these types of household units can tell you interesting things about how America is changing demographically, but they shed no useful light on the circumstances in which most children are reared today in the United States.

Thus America in 1987 contained 89.5 million total households, according to the Census Bureau. But only 8.9 million of these were "traditional" families: those with dependent children, homemaker mothers and breadwinner fathers. That's a little more than 9.9 percent — just small enough to edge under the 10 percent line. Yet ironically, if we use this method of calculation, we find that "traditional families" were less than one-third of all households even in the "traditional" 1950s.

■

So it is fairly simple to shrink the "Ozzie and Harriets" from 33.3 percent — the largest group — into a quaint and negligible-sounding "fewer than 10 percent." The trick is either not understanding, or not caring about, basic demographic differences among families, or even about the distinction between families and nonfamily households.

But is all this more than a statistical quibble? Yes. We are a diverse nation. We have different types of families. Many parents today, including many mothers of young children, work outside the home in full-time jobs. They deserve support — new policies from both government and employers to help them balance the demands of family and work. National leaders, including Schroeder and Dodd, now champion their cause.

But all families deserve support, not just some. Parents who stay at home with children are not bad, quaint or even unusual. The 10-percent message tells them they are. It tells them they are old-fashioned, outmoded, irrelevant. It tells millions of families that they hardly exist as a force in society. It turns the nation's family-policy debate — which should focus on strengthening all families — into special-interest pleading that needlessly pits one type of family against another. One small step would begin the journey toward correcting this unfairness. The nation's two most prominent and frequent proponents of the under-10-percent idea should simply stop repeating it.

David Blankenhorn is president of the Institute for American Values, a policy group concerned with family issues.

BY DANIEL SELIGMAN

LOOKING TO HARRIET

■ Inspired by a recent op-ed piece in the Washington *Post*, we sidled up to Nexis the other day and nonchalantly asked how many news stories in 1989 included the phrase "Ozzie and Harriet." Startling answer: 88 stories. Usual context in which those names from the Fifties were being invoked: A politician was onstage reciting the news that the traditional nuclear family—the kind symbolized by the Nelsons during their marathon stint on black-and-white TV—was dead or dying. Usual moral of the recitativo: We need a government program to help out the new nontraditional family—the kind where mom is a cop, the kids are on dope, and dad is nonexistent or worse.

The op-ed piece, written by David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values, argues that the nuclear family is less dead than advertised and mom is at home more than you might think. Blankenhorn turns out to be right. Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut was way off base last March when he proclaimed at a press conference, called to celebrate his big new day care bill: "There are only one in ten American families today where you have mom at home and dad at work—only one in ten. Ozzie and Harriet . . . are gone."

Chris got his 10% ratio by (a) ignoring the difference between full-time and part-time work and (b) confusing families and nonfamily households. The correct way to frame the issue is to first focus on families with kids, then ask how many of them have working mothers. If you were talking about young (under 6) kids, the answer would show that only around 36% of the moms had full-time jobs. Another 16% had part-time jobs, which in the average case involved around 20 hours a week. Another 5%, many looking for part-time work, were unemployed. And the largest category of all, 44%, were staying at home like Harriet. Even when the kids get older, the data do not tell you that the Harriets are disappearing. Among mothers with kids 14 to 17 years old, 26% are still out of the labor force.

Rummaging through our new O&H file, we kept running into a thought that was new to us: that Harriet basically had a miserable time of it back there in the Fifties. According to *Champion of the Great American Family*, as Representative Pat Schroeder of Denver has mysteriously titled her new book, the suburbs were "female ghettos" inhabited by women who had been brainwashed into believing that homemaking was a career. A detail we especially relished: "If a man walked down the street of a suburb during the day, folks might call the police."

The sentence somehow called up an image of old Ozzie himself in trouble with the law. It could have been made into a whole episode, and might even have answered a question we viewers wondered about for years: Precisely what did Oz, now routinely identified as America's paradigmatic sole provider, *do* for a living?

REPORTER ASSOCIATE *Patty de Llosa*

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1989

Toward the 18th Hole With Baby Boomers

To the Editor:

Your article on golf (front, page Sept. 4) offers many plausible reasons why the game has become America's fastest-growing sport, but

Thomas Kerr

overlooks the most obvious: the aging of the baby boom generation.

Golf is excellent exercise for people who are, well, no longer kids. Every time the baby boomers enter a new phase of the life cycle, they create front-page stories and new consumer fashions. In the 1950's, hula hoops. In the 1970's, jogging. Now come middle-age sports such as golf.

Before too long we baby boomers will discover old age. Shuffleboard anyone?

DAVID BLANKENHORN

New York, Sept. 4, 1989

The Public Interest
No. 97, Fall 1989

All in the Family

DAVID BLANKENHORN

***Pat Schroeder (with Andrea Camp and Robyn Lipner):* Champion of the Great American Family.** *Random House. 194 pp. $17.95.*

***David Popenoe:* Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies.** *Aldine de Gruyter. 420 pp. $49.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

IN WASHINGTON today, "family policy" is a term unburdened by any specific meaning. Want to help the poor? Want to cut taxes? Want to support working women? Want children to pray in school? If you do, or do not, then you want "family policy." Similarly, "the family" and "family values," while frequently invoked, usually amount to little more than rhetorical Trojan Horses, intended to camouflage any number of special interests and hidden agendas.

Why is our current debate on the state of the family so weak and unfocused? Part of the reason, of course, is simple political opportunism: family rhetoric sells. But there is also a deeper and more intellectually important reason.

I would like to suggest that today's serious family debate becomes coherent only when seen as the clash of two implicit world

views. Moreover, because these governing outlooks do not fit our usual categories of "liberal" and "conservative," they remain largely invisible to the public, and poorly understood even by many who are active in the debate.

One school of thought could be called optimistic and the other pessimistic. Both sides agree that the family is changing. But optimists emphasize the positive (or at least benign) results of those changes, particularly for women, and propose social policies to reflect and accommodate the new realities. Pessimists, on the other hand, see the family in decline as a social institution and emphasize the negative consequences of that decline, particularly for children.

Elite opinion today—in the media, in government, on the two coasts—tilts toward optimism, and away from the more pessimistic cast of grass-roots opinion. Congresswoman Pat Schroeder of Colorado is probably the nation's most prominent and articulate spokesman for the optimistic view. Her new book, *Champion of the Great American Family*, is an eloquent summary of the optimists' perspective on the changing American family.

Until recently, most scholarly experts have tended to be optimists. Mary Jo Bane's influential 1976 book on the family, for example, delivers a message that is implicit in the book's title: *Here to Stay*. Many ideas of family decline, she wrote, are "more myth than fact." Her study reported "surprising stabilities" in American families and "the persistence of commitments to family life."

Recent scholarship, however, has become more pessimistic. By far the most important benchmark in this direction is David Popenoe's *Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies*. Popenoe, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University, has written an important book that attempts to

> provide an objective analysis of family change—to present as much solid knowledge as possible about how the institution of the family in modern society is changing, why it is changing, and what the social implications of that change may be.

Although Popenoe's book is carefully nuanced to encompass alternative views, his conclusions are almost Spenglerian. For that reason, it is instructive to read his book together with Schroeder's.

It would be wrong to say that the books differ simply because one is political and the other scholarly. Nor is theirs the familiar dispute between "liberalism" and "conservatism." (Both authors, in fact, are "liberals" in the contemporary sense.) Their dispute is of a different nature: they disagree fundamentally on the social consequences of family change in our era.

FOR SCHROEDER, as with many people who write about the family, theory is autobiography; thus the subtitle of *Champion of the Great American Family* is "A Personal and Political Book." Schroeder's optimism about family change is rooted in her own

experience. As a young attorney in Denver in the 1960s, she became a local, and later national, leader in the movements to expand opportunities for women in the workplace and in public life. In short, the women's movement changed her life for the better.

Along with her pioneering career achievements, Schroeder is also the married mother of two children. She knows well the often formidable challenges facing parents, especially mothers, who seek to balance career and family. She and her own family seem to have struck that balance with notable success, flair, and good humor. But it required adaptation. When her first child was born in 1966, she quit her job, only to discover that "I didn't like being a full-time homemaker. The truth is, I failed homemaking. I found it incredibly frustrating." She

> soon learned that children don't care who does their laundry or grocery shopping or makes their bed. In fact, they don't care if anyone does it.... In short order I gave up many of my ideas about what was required of a proper wife and mother.

Elected to Congress in 1972, she came to Washington determined to "champion women's rights and the American family." Her guiding principle has been that

> if we get rid of the inequalities that hinder women, we strengthen the family at the same time. For me, building a family policy has meant finding a way to bridge the gap between public policy and the reality of women's lives.

Schroeder today is a leading congressional proponent of what she terms "a national family policy." The main components of her proposed policy include: more child-care assistance for working parents; family- and medical-leave legislation, which would grant working parents the right to unpaid, job-protected leaves in order to care for newly born or seriously ill children; stricter child-support requirements for divorced or separated noncustodial parents, usually fathers; additional services and supports for divorced and widowed women, especially displaced homemakers; pay equity (comparable worth) for working women; greater state efforts to prevent domestic violence and child abuse; and larger tax deductions for families with children, especially two-earner families. Current policies, Schroeder argues, "lag far behind the realities faced by today's working families." Her proposed family policy, by contrast, would "acknowledge the kinds of lives women really lead" and assist families who are "desperate to find answers that will help them juggle all the chores modern life has laid upon them."

THERE IS much to admire in Pat Schroeder, and much to commend in her policy ideas. The particular vantage point from which she assesses recent changes in the family—as a champion of women's rights and of new opportunities for parents to combine work and family—is shared by millions of women and

men across the country, precisely because it reflects the realities of their lives. Her perspective will almost certainly, and in my view properly, influence public policy in the 1990s.

Yet Schroeder's analysis of the family as a social institution is seriously flawed. These analytic failures, moreover, are not simply intellectual shortcomings; they distort her policy agenda. Also, especially because her views typify much of today's elite conventional wisdom, they help to impoverish the nation's larger cultural debate on the status and future of the family.

Her basic failure is this: she refuses to distinguish between the needs of working women as individuals and those of the family as an institution. Indeed, she frequently asserts that their needs are identical. Her entire analysis and policy agenda, in fact, are rooted in this core idea.

Doubtless this belief is comforting. It simplifies things; as if by magic, it solves what otherwise would remain highly difficult problems. And, of course, no one would deny the important (if complex) relationships between the status of employed women and the status of the family as an institution.

But employed women do not a family make. The goals of women in the workplace are primarily individual: social recognition, wages, hours, opportunities for advancement and self-fulfillment. The family is about collective goals that by definition extend beyond the individual: procreation, socializing the young, caring for the old, and building life's most enduring bonds of affection, nurturance, mutual support, and long-term commitment. Virtually any family scholar would agree that Schroeder's insistence on the idea of full symmetry is self-evidently untrue.

There is another, related problem. One of Schroeder's most deeply held beliefs—and a basic tenet of the optimists' view of the changing family—is that people who disagree with her suffer from a disabling "nostalgia" about "the mythical family" of the past. These confused people, she explains, have

> based their criticisms on a mistaken and nostalgic view of a family that never (or hardly ever) existed. The Norman Rockwell picture that is dragged out like an icon as our ideal family is not something many Americans have experienced in real life.

On a nationally televised interview in 1988, she repeated what has become her trademark opening comment on the changing family: that "only 7 percent" of today's families "fit the old 'Ozzie and Harriet' syndrome." To say that our nation's child-care policy must recognize the needs of traditional families, she writes, "is like saying the highway program must recognize people who don't drive."

These ideas—particularly the notion that few of today's families contain homemaker mothers married to breadwinner fathers—are very widespread. They largely govern the media's treatment of family issues, in no small part due to Schroeder's flair and per-

sistence in marketing them. The 7-percent figure is probably today's most repeated statistic about the American family.

Yet these claims cannot be supported by the evidence. Certainly maternal employment and family diversity are among the most important family trends of the past quarter-century. But traditional families still comprise the nation's largest group of families with preschool children. Viewed from any reasonable angle, the 7-percent claim is flatly wrong—not just factually wrong in some technical sense, but fundamentally wrong, in that it creates a distorted picture of our society. So, of course, does the even wilder exaggeration that traditional nuclear families "never (or hardly ever) existed."

In addition, the "nostalgia" charge only diverts attention from the real question. David Popenoe clearly has Schroeder's type of argument in mind when he remarks that

> [b]eing nostalgic about the past may be in the same class as being optimistic about the future, and it is quite possibly a natural human propensity. But challenging popular nostalgia about families of the past says little about how the family as an institution has in fact empirically been changing, and whether or not that change could be defined as decline.

Schroeder's two core assumptions—that traditional families no longer exist and that employed women can be equated with the family as an institution—enable her to glide into a one-sidedly optimistic assessment of recent changes in the American family. We must, she argues, "rise above the doom-and-gloom predictions" of those who

> were wrong, of course. The American family was not in danger of extinction. Over the course of our three-hundred year history it has weathered far-reaching social and economic change by changing itself dramatically.

She insists that family decline has been greatly exaggerated:

> The statistics on divorce were high and on the increase, but so were the figures for remarriage. The majority of Americans who divorced did not give up on marriage, they just went looking for a more perfect union. People did not stop having children, they tried to figure out the best way to manage.

Note the straw men residing in these quotations. What serious analyst ever suggested that the family was becoming "extinct"? Who ever said that Americans were "giving up on marriage" or had decided to "stop having children"? These are not serious topics. Whether the family is in decline as an institution, however, remains profoundly serious.

Is it really true, as Schroeder implies, that marriage and remarriage convey the same good news about the institution of marriage? To borrow again from the Popenoe book, isn't that like saying that America's high rate of residential mobility proves that

Americans love rootedness and community? After all, don't we move around in search of stronger roots and a better community? Even accounting for the usual quotient of hyperbole that we permit our political leaders, the glibness of this style of argument is remarkable.

IN SOME respects, Popenoe's *Disturbing the Nest* is a scholarly jeremiad; he asks that we reexamine the evidence and recognize the family "as a perishable social institution that is being quietly corroded by some of the social and cultural currents of our time." To him

> the interesting question is not why people believe in the "myth" of family decline, but why so many sociologists think of family decline as a myth and seek to dismiss the idea with such vigor and seeming certainty. The irony of the vigorous promotion by sociologists today of the antidecline position is that it comes precisely at a time when the family has been changing rapidly, far more rapidly than in those previous historical periods when the idea of family decline was pervasive among members of the social-science community.

Popenoe is a meticulous scholar. His book carefully evaluates a vast amount of evidence on recent family trends in four modern societies: Sweden, the United States, New Zealand, and Switzerland. The heart of the book, however, is an analysis of the Swedish family.

Popenoe focuses on Sweden—offering more information about this society, in fact, than some readers may desire—for two reasons. First, family decline has been greater in Sweden than in any other modern society. Moreover, current family trends in Sweden reflect, in advanced form, trends that are evident today in most modern societies, and particularly in the United States. New Zealand and Switzerland are examined, though less intensively, because they represent the other end of the spectrum: family change has been much less rapid in these nations.

Popenoe is at great pains to define "decline" analytically rather than pejoratively or morally. The family is "declining," in his view, when it is "becoming weaker" as an institution. This process includes five measurable trends: first, individual members become more autonomous and less bound by the family, which in turn becomes less cohesive; second, the family becomes less able to carry out its social functions (maintaining the population level, regulating sexual behavior, socializing children, and caring for its members); third, the family loses power to other institutions, such as schools, the media, and the state; fourth, families get smaller and more unstable as people spend less time in them; and finally, familism as a cultural value loses ground to other values such as individualism and egalitarianism.

Guided by these standards of measurement, Popenoe presents overwhelming evidence that family decline is one of the most sig-

nificant trends in modern societies. Yet his evaluation cannot be reduced simply to what Schroeder calls "doom and gloom." He insists, for example, that "decline" is not simply "bad." It may well be that

> many aspects of family decline are "good," for the individual, for society, or for both. To think of family decline only in the negative makes no more sense than to think only negatively about the decline of feudalism, hereditary monarchies, or dictatorships.

The decline of the family coincides with the rise of many of today's reigning cultural ideals: personal autonomy, self-expression, individual rights, sexual freedom, social equality, and tolerance for alternative lifestyles. It may be true, on the whole, that people are happier today—despite or even because of family decline—than ever before. Certainly most people in the West live longer, in better health, and more affluently than ever before.

Popenoe fully concedes the advances of modernity. But he directs us to different, more troubling issues. Most people, he shows, "agree on the ideal of a strong family." Yet "the family decline in evidence today strikes at the very root of this ideal." Marriage, for example, is becoming "deinstitutionalized": in Sweden, one of every four cohabiting couples is unmarried, and nearly half of all childbirths occur outside of marriage. Yet "in all of human history up to the present some form of public marriage has been the basis of the family as a social institution."

The number of people living alone increased by 50 percent in Sweden between 1968 and 1981. Even members of families are becoming "less dependent on each other": they spend less time in the role of family member and more time as "clients of a large group of public employees who take care of them throughout their lives." Yet certainly these "nonkin relationships typically lack the special sense of obligations and responsibilities found in kinship ties." Is it not probable that these shifts weaken the "psychological anchorage" of adults in modern societies?

AT THE HEART of Popenoe's jeremiad, however, is the changing "social ecology of child rearing" and the manifest shift in modern societies "from child-centeredness to adult-centeredness." With each year, he concludes, modern societies are "drifting farther away" from what is demonstrably "the ideal child rearing environment." Such an environment includes

> a relatively large family that does a lot of things together, has many routines and traditions, and provides a great deal of quality contact time between adults and children; regular contact with relatives, active neighboring in a supportive neighborhood, and contact with the world of work; little concern on the part of children that their parents will break up; and the coming together of all these ingredients in the development of a rich family subculture that has lasting meaning and strongly promulgates traditional family values.

Imagine two infants. You know nothing about them except these facts: one is born in the United States in 1950, and the other is born in the United States today. Now surmise—knowing full well the social and material progress of the past forty years—which of those two infants will have a better quality of life during childhood.

Your answer to this question may be the best indicator of whether, after all the facts are weighed and the issues debated, your view of the changing family is more optimistic or pessimistic. My own sense is that the pessimists have the better argument—that Americans today are increasingly unwilling, either through private behavior or public action, to value purposes larger than the self, and especially unwilling to foster good environments for children. I suspect that our "parent deficit" is at least as dangerous to our long-term well-being as are our budget and trade deficits. Perhaps, too, the habits of heart and mind that produce the latter also create the former.

Popenoe describes the complex challenge that we face with admirable balance and brevity:

> How can ... advanced nations encourage women to participate fully in public life, provide family members with all of the public facilities and services they need for lives of material equality and abundance, yet still maintain the family as a strong institution?

Few questions in our time are as urgent as this one. At stake is nothing less than the kind of society we wish to have.

David Blankenhorn is president of the Institute for American Values.

The Miami Herald

SUNDAY,
MARCH 25, 1990

NEW HOPE FOR THE FAMILY

David Popenoe, associate dean for the social sciences at Rutgers University, is author of Disturbing the Nest: Family Change and Decline in Modern Societies. *He's a member of the scholarly advisory board of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based organization that researches family issues.*

By DAVID POPENOE

People who worry about the American family may soon be in for a big surprise. In fact, many family experts of the 1980s may have spent a decade perfecting exactly the wrong message for the young people of the 1990s.

These commentators offer a "me-generation" message that celebrates individualism, family diversity and alternative life styles. But the coming decade could witness the demise of the "me-generation" ethic, with its emphasis on self-expression and self-fulfillment. Instead, the emerging values of the 1990s are likely to be the old-fashioned ones: marital commitment and family obligation. Sound unlikely? Consider what happened 30 years ago.

In 1959, even the experts did not predict that the most family-oriented decade in recent American history was about to be turned on its head. They did not imagine that people's life goals were about to shift from institutional commitment to self-fulfillment. Nor did they foresee that the family as an institution would enter a period of steep decline. In the following three decades — partly owing to a skyrocketing divorce rate, a declining marriage rate and a plummeting birth rate — the proportion of an adult's life spent with spouse and children would drop from 62 percent, the highest point in our history, to 43 percent, the lowest in our history.

These changes were unanticipated because predictions of that time simply extended the trends already under way. Yet predicting the future in this manner is highly risky. Societies

PLEASE SEE **FAMILY, 5C**

(over)

The Miami Herald

SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 1990

FAMILY, *FROM* **1C**

can change direction suddenly. It is difficult to foresee those emerging constellations of human will that create new trends rather than extend old ones. To take a different example, who in 1988 would have predicted recent events in Eastern Europe?

Thus predicting the further decline of the family in the 1990s may be far off base. Consider what the '90s would look like if the trends of the last 30 years were simply to continue. Only about three quarters of the population would marry. The great majority of marriages would end in divorce. The birth rate would drop to a level well below that necessary for population replacement. Adultery would become the norm. Children would make up a majority of the poor.

Is that what the 1990s will look like? I think not. New cultural values may well overtake currently dominant trends, just as they did in the 1960s. The shift will be generated by the young people now coming of age — the children of the sexual, divorce and "me" revolutions. What are these young people saying today? If my college students who write a paper entitled "My Family Ties" are any example, they fall into two groups.

One group expresses profound appreciation for what their families have meant to them and done for them. They consider themselves lucky and hope to duplicate these family experiences as adults. The other group, unlucky and larger every year, writes a different message: As adults they vow to dedicate themselves to developing a much better family life than the one in which they were forced to grow up. Although the messages differ, in one respect both groups are the same — each is strongly imbued with family values that go well beyond the "me."

Will the '90s bring the demise of the 'me-generation'?

Nationally, the picture is similar. When asked in a recent survey, "How important to you in your life is having a good marriage and family life?", 93 percent of high school senior girls and 86 percent of boys answered "extremely important" or "quite important."

These hints of an imminent shift are consistent with the fact that value change in society is cyclical. The longer that individualist (me) values are at the fore, the more people realize that social (family) values are seriously lacking. Eventually, the cultural tide shifts in a new direction. Indeed, there is evidence that cultural values fluctuate over roughly 30-year cycles — precisely the time period between the '60s and the '90s.

Not coincidentally, 30 years is also the life span of a generation. Value change occurs as the parents of one generation are succeeded by their children. The unanticipated social changes of the late 1960s and '70s were carried out by the children of the purportedly strong families of the '40s and early '50s. These children obviously found something seriously wrong with their families, or they would not have rejected them so forcefully. I would not bet against the prospect that the children of the "me-generation," in like manner, will just as forcefully reject the family conditions under which they grew up.

Since these potential changes are the product of human will, they can be encouraged — or retarded — by the words and deeds of America's current opinion leaders. As always, the young learn from the old. Yet many of today's family authorities, apparently believing that present trends are here to stay, focus only on helping us adapt to the changes of the "me-generation." They tell us to appreciate the virtues of family diversity and alternative life styles. They report that family life in America has not really declined, it's just "changing." But what most young people now want to hear — and should — concerns the importance of marital commitment and family obligation.

Special to The Herald

Institute For American Values
250 West 57th Street Suite 2415
New York, NY 10107

Los Angeles Times
A Times Mirror Newspaper

SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1990

Listen to Your Grandmother

■ Family: Social programs are not enough to stop the decline because the root of the problem is cultural, not economic or political.

By DAVID BLANKENHORN

Most people today believe that the family is in trouble. More than 60% of Americans, for example, agreed that "family values" are losing ground, according to a poll commissioned by Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co. Most see the nation's "quality of family life" not only as deteriorating and likely to get worse, but also as an underlying source of many social problems. Similarly, a Harris poll finds that most adults believe that it's harder to be a child today than when they were growing up.

Even scholarly experts on the family—until recently much more sanguine than the general public—now tend to a pessimistic assessment. At a recent Stanford conference, a diverse group of prominent scholars argued that the family is becoming less able to carry out its basic social functions. Most indicators of child well-being, for example, show that the quality of life for America's children is declining. Our society suffers from a family deficit—one that is probably more dangerous than our trade or budget deficits.

So the controversial question is no longer whether we have a family deficit, but why. The debate now shifts from conditions to causes, since understanding causes is the logical requirement for offering solutions.

There are two likely but competing answers to the question, "What is the source of today's family dilemma?"

Call the first explanation "Reagan closed the bathrooms." This label is inspired by a trend in New York City: People have taken to urinating on the sidewalks. Not just the homeless, or even the poor, but all manner of citizens who, well, feel the need to go. What causes this behavior? One answer is the shortage of public toilets and the government's neglect of public amenities. In short, the root cause is not changing standards of personal behavior, but instead those larger political and economic forces that, in effect, close the bathrooms.

Precisely this philosophy governs much of the family debate. According to this view, the crisis is not even primarily about the family. The problem lies in outside institutions, such as the workplace and government, that fail to respond to new realities: divorce, single-parent households, the two-gender work force, teen-age parenthood, latchkey children, and so on. The challenge is not to change family behavior, but to change those larger institutions. Schools must help, not stigmatize, unwed teen-age parents. Corporations must subsidize child care. Courts must confer equal legal status on alternative lifestyles.

An entirely different but widely held perspective might be termed "Grandmother knows best." The label refers to my conclusion that you will learn more about the American family from 10 grandmothers than you will from 10 family experts. Take the issue of single-parent homes. Are they "just as good as" two-parent homes? Experts in conference rooms are likely to resist making "value judgments." Grandmothers on front porches are not so inhibited. They are likely to tell you plainly that two parents are better than one. They tend to say things like: "People today care more about themselves and less about others." "They are less willing to make sacrifices." "Children today are not taught a sense of right and wrong."

In this view, the problem is not the system. The problem is us. Parents not spending enough time with their kids. Children bearing children. People seeing family obligations as an obstacle to self-fulfillment rather than as a pathway to it. The source of the dilemma, therefore, is not economic or political but cultural. The problem is an increasingly atomized, adult-centered society in which expressive individualism has become a governing cultural ideal, overshadowing and, to some degree, displacing other norms such as civic virtue, religious beliefs and family values.

Which viewpoint will guide public discourse in the 1990s? I suspect the smart money is with "Reagan closed the bathrooms." It's easier to argue, and it leads to policy ideas. And, of course, there is much truth in this perspective. I certainly wish that "they" would reopen—indeed, build more—public toilets. I also wish that they would provide better medical care to poor children, improve the schools, open more drug-treatment centers and help parents with child care. I favor raising my taxes—or yours, anyway—in order to do this.

But I do not kid myself that these measures—or 100 like them—strike at the heart of why the family as a social institution is in decline. In the final analysis, the grandmothers are right. The source of that decline is cultural. Reagan can close public toilets, and I can vote against him because of it. But he does not—he cannot—cause me to urinate in public. Only I can decide to do that. And if what we as a society are doing to the family is the cultural equivalent of urinating in the street, then public policy is simply not enough to solve our dilemma.

David Blankenhorn is president of the Institute for American Values, a New York organization that does research on family issues.

The New York Times

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1990

Letters

Fathers of Old Also Cared for Children

To the Editor:

Three cheers for the new fathers who make career sacrifices to spend more time caring for their children (news article, April 12). But you and others writing on this subject perpetuate two false assumptions.

The first is that the new fathers represent the main new trend in fathering. They do not. To understand the major difference in fathering today as compared with 30 years ago, picture a father who is absent from the home altogether: divorced or never married, with little or no steady contact with his children. Sadly, the huge proliferation of this type of father far outweighs any increase in the number of nurturing fathers that you describe. That's why children today, as a group, spend less time with fathers — or for that matter with males generally — than they did in earlier generations.

The second is that "old fathers" — fathers of earlier generations — were emotionally distant, absorbed in work and resistant to the hard work of child care. It is not surprising that new parents of the baby boom generation — who often act as if what we are doing has never been done in world history — would set up this historical straw father to look good by comparison. But as a baby boomer myself, I know that my own father does not fit this stereotype at all. Nor do most of the fathers of the children I grew up with. When it comes to marital commitment and family obligation, many of us new fathers could do worse than to remember our old fathers.

Thomas Kerr

DAVID BLANKENHORN

New York, April 12, 1990

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES

250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415

NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 1990 • USA TODAY

U.S. TODAY

LETTERLINE

Comments from readers across the USA

Microwave meals a bad deal: Your report on microwave meals for children focuses on nutrition and ignores the more important social trend: the breakdown of the family meal. Eating together is a basic ritual of family life. But customized microwave meals undermine this. They transform children's eating from a social experience to a purely individual experience. Meals, removed from the family context, are reduced to the human equivalent of putting gas in a car — physically necessary but not emotionally enriching. How sad that our society is increasingly telling children, literally, to feed themselves.

David Blankenhorn, president
Institute for American Values
New York, N.Y.

EAST SIDE WEEKEND
Cincinnati, Ohio

A WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE DELIVERED TO 75,000 EASTSIDE HOMES
Vol. 1, No. 7, Week of May 10-May 16, 1990

Who You Gonna Call?

As Mother's Day approached, we at *EastSide Weekend* thought to interview the most knowledgeable experts we could find on mothering and child-rearing: five grandmothers. Recently, *The Los Angeles Times* syndicated a column by David Blankenhorn, the president of the Institute for American Values in New York City. In the article he asserted that "you can learn more about the American family from 10 grandmothers than you will from 10 family experts."

So we assembled in our offices a roundtable panel of five ladies who learned the special skills of mothering — and grandmothering — first-hand: Minnie Friedman, 78, of Montgomery; Mary Morris, 79, of Montgomery; Mary Lou Peterson, 67, of Landen; Jackie Rumsey, 43, of Maineville; and Charlotte Wiethe of Deer Park.

We asked them some tough questions — from what to tell the kids about the Mapplethorpe exhibit to how to control the inevitable profane language. We got back honest advice on how to raise kids in the crazy world we call the 1990s.

Mothers Of Today: Do They Have It Better Or Worse ?

Charlotte: I think they have it harder because so much more is expected from the mothers of today. For one thing, I suppose in many cases they are working full time, which adds to their burden and I think they probably find it harder to give the spontaneous, loving free time to the children.

Minnie: I think they have it harder,too, because in our day we didn't have to worry about the drugs that were going on and today they do have to worry about the drugs and their influences and that makes it very difficult for mothers and grandmothers, believe me. You hear so many horrible stories.

Grandma!

Jackie: I think from speaking as probably a little bit younger grandmother than the rest in the room I probably have lived through both. I feel like I am sort of in the middle — between the mothers of today and probably some of you as grandmothers and I will have to agree. I think it is very, very difficult and seeing my daughters now who are relatively young starting off again with jobs, pressures. I think it is tougher, although even in my generation we were starting into that. And I've been a working mother and now a working grandmother and I think it was tough.

Kids & Mothering: More Or Less?

Mary Lou: I think that they definitely want more mothering. Most children lack that today. I also think the mothers today

Please see GRANDMA, page 18

Experts: Grandmas know best

By R L. Buse III
EastSide Weekend

David Blankenhorn chuckled heartily on the phone — over the honks and horns of the New York streets below — when he heard that *EastSide Weekend* had invited five grandmothers to a roundtable discussion to ask their "expert" advice on raising children.

There's no shortage of "expert" advice on the shelves of area bookstores.

"This is great!" he exclaimed.

Mr. Blankenhorn knows a little bit about experts and child-rearing — he's the president of the Institute for American Values. He recently wrote a nationally syndicated column for *The Los Angeles Times* asserting, in part, that "you will learn more about the American family from 10 grandmothers than you will from 10 family experts."

Mr. Blankenhorn says he wrote that phrase about grandmothers as an hyperbole — "I intended the comment to be humorous" — but he doesn't back down from the assertion that many times grandmas *do* know best.

"I believe humor can speak the truth," he says.

Mr. Blankenhorn explains that professional experts, no matter how knowledgeable, tend to issue "policy statements" and not clear, honest answers concerning the problems of today's families.

TOP TIPS

Here are 10 suggestions stressed by our five family "experts":

- Make sure you hug your children in the morning and at bedtime.
- Don't schedule too many activities — allow for quiet time.
- Too often kids' activities are too structured. Let them just play.
- Families should enjoy at least one meal together a day.
- Parents should consult their children on family activities.
- Children have a right to privacy — honor it.
- Treat a child's feelings like you would an adult's.
- Be truthful with children on the issues of sexuality and profane language.
- Parents should use more common sense.
- Tell your children every day that you love them.

— R.L. Buse III

Continued from Page 1

"Experts are least likely to offer a judgment," he says. "If you ask experts you tend to get a policy agenda."

"Grandmothers tend to be less inhibited," he adds.

And grandmothers know the answers because they lived through the problems first-hand.

"Grandmother-aged people have seen more happen, they have seen the decline in the American family institution, they have observed this themselves," Mr. Blankenhorn says. In comparison, "younger people tend to believe that every generation is a little better off than the generation before."

When told that our grandmothers — our *experts* — suggested that parents spend more time with their kids, Mr. Blankenhorn quickly concurred. "These grandmothers have put their finger on the heart of the problem — the family-time famine."

"We're not investing the time in children that earlier generations did," Mr. Blankenhorn says. "You pay for that in the long run."

Mr. Blankenhorn asserts that grandmothers are skeptical of the "Me Generation" values that are so commonplace today. "Experts tend to accept that as a given," he says. "I think the tide is going to turn to family-oriented values. A lot of experts are going to find themselves out of fashion."

Mr. Lon Kriner of Xavier University didn't see Mr. Blankenhorn's nationally syndicated column, but he wholeheartedly agrees that grandmothers are underrated experts on family life.

"I defer to the grandmothers," says Mr. Kriner, the assistant vice president for counseling and health services at XU.

"A lot of their advice is on timeless issues," Mr. Kriner says. "A grandmother is a wonderful source of many ideas."

But Mr. Kriner points out grandmothers can't have all the answers to society's ills. He cites the problems with alcohol and juveniles in the 1990s. "I'm not sure it was as commonplace and as difficult then as it is today."

Mr. Kriner suggests one reason younger parents don't call on their grandparents for more advice is "nobody likes to hear of their own failures."

"I think the perspective that grandparents have is a very healthy one."

Mr. Kriner adds in a light-hearted manner: "One of the nice things about grandmothers is their fee. All you have to do is wipe your feet as you walk in and give them a big hug."

As Mr. Blankenhorn adds, "I really do believe you can learn a lot from a room full of grandmothers."

The staff of *EastSide Weekend* certainly agrees.

> ***'Grandmother-aged people have seen. . . the decline in the American family institution.'***
>
> ***— David Blankenhorn***

Continued from Page 1

have a much tougher time. There is so much peer pressure amongst the mothers, not just the children, but amongst the mothers to compete with everybody. And I think the children get left out a little bit because the mothers are trying so hard to work and keep up with everybody else in the neighborhood.

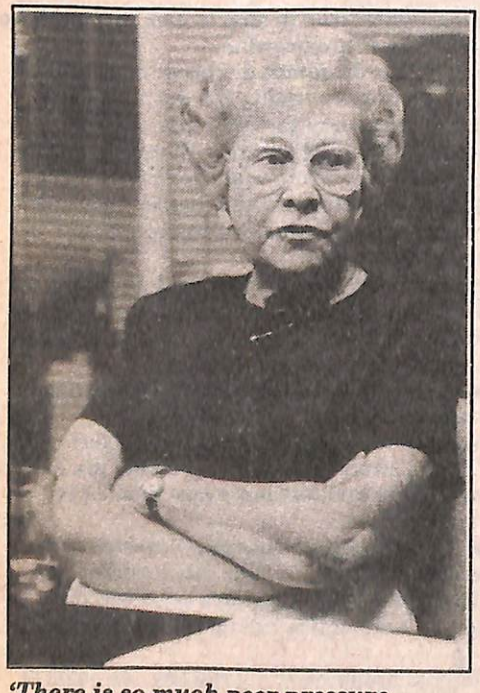
Quality Time

Charlotte: I think it's a little difficult to define quality time. To me quality time can be an hour of nothing planned, but just being with the child and just letting things develop. It doesn't necessarily have to be reading or anything that is pre-planned, and I think that is one of the things that is missed by the children now because their life is so structured. Everything has to be almost like push-button and I think the children miss a great deal.

If You Had Just One Hour A Day. . .

Mary: I think I would sit and talk and review their school work if they're going to school, and be happy with them and talk with them.

Minnie: I just liked being with them and knowing what they did for the day. They would tell me everything and it was so much fun listening to what they did and I enjoyed it.



'There is so much peer pressure amongst mothers, not just children, but amongst the mothers to compete with everybody.'

— Mary Lou Peterson

Charlotte: I take care of my little 20-month-old grandson one morning a week and that's a real pleasure and it's fun to get down on the floor with him and play cars. I feel sorry for the many children who don't have the opportunity to do this either with their parents or their grandparents. And that's what is very difficult for some of the parents today because they don't have time for something so simple — yet so meaningful.

What Mistakes Are Mothers Making?

Charlotte: Probably schedule too much. Everything now is so organized — children can't play any sport unless they are on a team. There isn't a spontaneous attitude with the children — they have to take tennis lessons. All the sports are wonderful, I think, but it's a pity that it all has to be so structured and operated by adults.

'I think their lives are just too jammed packed today — both parents and children.'

— Charlotte Wiethe

Kids And Family Decisions

Minnie: I definitely think they should be consulted because they are part of the family. What they want is important, too, and what they think is important and it should be to you, too.

Charlotte: I think it's very important for the children to be in on discussions. However, I think you have to be careful pertaining to the subject that is discussed because children will have opinions at a young age and their capabilities aren't there to make those decisions. But I think it's important to have them to have input.

Kids' Rights

Mary Lou: I think they should have the right to privacy but I don't think they should have the right to do *anything*. They need a lot of discipline, a lot of guidance. When they see the parents do the right thing, they will do the right thing. And the parents have to be careful about what to do in front of their children and what they talk about and I think parents should really control the television.

Who You Gonna Call?

Jackie: I feel really strongly that children are, of course, human beings and that children have feelings; they hurt just as an adult hurts; they're confused just as much as an adult is confused. And I think in many instances children are overlooked. It didn't make any difference what they were feeling, if they were having an up day or a down day. And I have tried to say to myself: "Remember that that child is going through the same thing you are going through, but just in a different way." And if I would respect the fact Mary Lou, who happens to be a friend of mine, too, is having a down day or an up day I should respect my child just as much and try to go along accordingly. What I see in some of the cases where parents — they don't seem to respect that age. "C'mon Johnny, we're going anyway," or "We're going here or we're going there." Nothing to what Johnny is feeling, nothing to what Susie is feeling or whatever. I think you have to treat your child just as you would any other adult in the world.

'I definitely think they (children) should be consulted because they are part of the family. What they want is important, too.'
— Minnie Friedman

Dirty Words

Mary: Well, I would say not to use them at all, with their friends or at home or wherever.
EastSide: I'm going to play the child for a moment: "But all my friends do!"
Mary: "Well, your friends can but you can't," I would say.
Minnie: They don't want to be called a sissy, like the other kids are using them.
Charlotte: I think when you mentioned the definition of the words — that's the key. Tell them exactly what the words mean, and I don't see how you can ever make a child promise never to use a word he shouldn't or one that's not in good taste. But at the same time I think you can tell them you don't approve of them.

Human Sexuality

Charlotte: Here again I think being truthful with the child, and trying to encourage the child no matter what the subject is, don't ever hesitate to come to ask. You'll never be criticized for asking anything.
EastSide: What's an appropriate age today?
Minnie: Eight (years old).
Charlotte: Somewhere before puberty. If a child at 8 years old would really ask.
Mary Lou: It's so hard for parents today raising their children. I'm just thankful I'm a grandmother and don't have to go through this, but with the grandchildren, especially my 10-year-old granddaughter, she is starting to ask questions and I have found that if you give them a direct answer they forget about it very quickly. Of course I know in a few years she'll want more explanations and I think you just have to go according to your

Grandmas distrust 'Me' values

upbringing and teach them the best way you can. Be sure of their friends and just give them some good guidance and good examples when home.

Jackie: I have found that my daughters have come home and talked about more things openly than I ever thought of doing with my mother or she ever thought of doing with me. So I think on one side of the coin it's easier but on the other side there is so much more out there and that makes it tough. You are just bouncing. I don't think anyone can wrong with the truth and with good example.

Books On Child-rearing

Jackie: (I have read) very few, I feel that if you tried to read all the books that are written and all the different theories, I think you would make one neurotic mother. Just in what you hear, listen to the talk shows, listen to the news, listen to "Good Morning America," whatever, there are so many different views out there if you tried to be this perfect mother, you would go crazy, and I think I'm probably a close example of being close to that.

Role Models

Mary Lou: I think the grandparents are good role models 'cause they have more time to just sit down and relax with the children. 'Cause my grandson thinks his grandfather is the greatest thing on Earth. And he made the statement, "My grandpa knows everything." And he was very emphatic. And believe me, Grandpa does not know everything. According to our little grandson, he does.

Minnie: My husband used to take my grandchildren, they're grown now, every Sunday to visit all of the family and they thought Grandpa knew everything. Anything they asked Grandpa, he always answered so he knew everything — and they looked forward to Sunday so much. It was something special.

Specific Advice

Jackie: Tell your child everyday that you love him, no matter what else, but sometime during that day how much you love them and how much they mean to you.

'I think you have to treat your child just as you would any other adult in the world.'

— Jackie Rumsey

Mary: I would say hug them every day, show your love.

Minnie: And spend at least a half-hour just talking to them, listening to them, I think that is very important.

Charlotte: Making sure that they know that you love them and physical contact. There's nothing like a hug.

Mary Lou: I think when the child or children get up in the morning is the most vulnerable time. And I think that's the time to give them that hug and start their day off right and tell them how wonderful they are and we have a beautiful day in front of us. Give them a few extra moments of love in the morning, and bedtime, too.

Charlotte: A child should never have to go to bed if his parents are angry at him.

Minnie: Let them know how much you love them.

'I think they (grandmothers) are very underrated (sources of advice).'

— Mary Morris

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

EDITORIALS

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR
TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 1990

The family

David Blankenhorn thinks the words "family policy" are a "political Rorschach test, designed to convey whatever anyone wants them to convey." And that worries him.

Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values, is convinced that strengthening the family is the nation's most urgent challenge. Yet, he asks, how can it be met when there is so much confusion and conflict as to what *is* family and what constitutes good family policy.

He notes that an influential segment of opinion rejects specific, values-based norms as discriminatory and oppressive. As a result, some strange critters show up in the family policy tent, including demands that company health insurance plans cover a homosexual partner.

Some ground rules are needed, Blankenhorn maintains, some consensus on values and standards. In an essay in the August/September issue of *First Things*, he outlines suggestions for a family agenda for the 1990s.

Whatever happened to the 'good family man'?

Americans must take a hard look at today's adult-centered society, in which free-wheeling individualism is the cultural ideal, he states. The family must be analyzed primarily through the eyes of children, "a perspective that is frequently absent in today's family debate."

In addition, Blankenhorn urges that family policy be formulated "from the inside out," from the vantage point of "family business," the business of marrying, having and rearing children, and fulfilling a lifetime commitment.

Those debating policy should agree on certain basic values, the first of which is that the family is society's core institution; that "the marital commitment is the foundation of strong families"; that "we see in children our hopes for the future"; that the parental role is irreplaceable; that "caring for our elders is one of the family's most important functions"; that the community is enriched by strong families; that basic moral values are passed on from parents to children; and that public and private sector policies should nourish families.

One of Blankenhorn's most intriguing recommendations is the return of the "good family man." The title was once widely bestowed as a badge of honor on men who put their family first. Today the phrase is considered antiquated, almost embarrassing. Contemporary culture no longer celebrates the compelling ideal. And that is no minor tragedy.

"Since some, even much, of today's family dilemma stems simply from male abandonment and male flight from family obligation, surely we must revive for the new century a widely shared conception of the good family man." Blankenhorn says.

He's right, of course. But equally imperative is the concept of the good family *woman*, the woman mature enough and wise enough to understand that a good family man is the finest gift she can give her children.

The Atlanta Journal AND CONSTITUTION SUN., SEPTEMBER 9, 1990

Raising kids in an unfriendly culture

By Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

Lack of time, values has parents worried

Our national debate on the family is being conducted in two separate languages, each foreign to the other.

The first is official language, spoken by experts and opinion leaders in politics, the media and academia. The second is family language, spoken by ordinary middle-class families.

The prime subject of the official debate is policies to help parents take care of children and hold down jobs at the same time. But the prime subject of the grass-roots conversation is how parents can do a decent job of raising kids in a culture that is unfriendly to families.

This divergence helps explain why parents aren't marching in the streets for more day care, family allowances, tax credits or other family supports. While these public programs are viewed by many parents as "good things," they simply do not touch the emotional core of family concerns.

What is at the emotional core, judging from the discussions I've held with parents, is a growing concern that their children are adopting the values of an aggressively materialistic, individualistic and consumerist culture. What concerns these parents, in brief, is the moral education of children.

During the late 1980s, I set out to talk with middle-class parents: mothers and fathers, single and married, with kids under 10 at home and with annual family incomes of $16,000 to $45,000. All of the fathers and a majority of mothers were holding jobs outside the home.

Admittedly, my effort was modest and my sample too small to be statistically significant. All told, I managed to reach about 100 parents. Nonetheless, the conversations provided insights on the realities of middle-class family life.

It is not an exaggeration to say that parents are mad as hell at what they see as dominant values in

Please see **FAMILY, G4** ▶

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead is a research associate at the Institute for American Values, a private organization with headquarters in New York. This article is excerpted from "Family Affairs," an institute publication.

the culture. This surfaces as parents talk about the pressure on their grade-school children to buy $65 Reeboks and $45 stonewashed jeans.

Parents see themselves in a struggle for the hearts and minds of their own children. As these parents express it, they are losing the struggle to pass on their family values to their children.

Three different parents from three different cities all tell roughly the same story:

- "We had to make our own fun because we didn't have the material things. When my mother washed the floor, we lined up the chairs and played train, and I can remember that was great. And now, if you tell the kids to do that, they look at you like, 'What are you talking about?' You know: 'Can't you get a movie for the VCR?' "
- "When I was a kid, if the TV broke or something, we would go out in the woods and build a fort. If the TV or VCR broke down now, they wouldn't know what to do."
- "When we were kids, we could have a great time playing in the back yard with a big cardboard box. Now my daughters can't have fun unless they've got a 'My Little Pony,' like the little girl behind us."

In the official debate among the experts, the remembered past is a sentimental fiction that blinds us to the real challenges of modern life.

But the mothers and fathers I met do not hesitate to look back at their own childhoods. And in a majority of cases, they report that families then were stronger, children better off, and community life far more supportive of family well-being.

In the official language, the family isn't getting weaker, it's just "changing." Most parents I met believe otherwise.

In the struggle for the hearts and minds of their children, parents cite another large obstacle: the loss of time with their children. Some have only an hour or two a day to devote exclusively to their children, and that time is sometimes broken into 15-minute or half-hour blocks.

Today's family schedules are customized to fit each individual family. They are as unique as a fingerprint or a snowflake. Three or four different toddlers on the block will scatter with their parents to three or four different child-care arrangements. Some mothers at home feel stranded, with no playmates for their kids.

A generation ago, family routines tended to be shared by nearly everyone on the block. Mothers put babies and toddlers down for naps at about the same time in the afternoon. Kids played in the streets until they were called for supper. Fathers washed cars in the driveway after work. Since family life moved in common rhythms, it was easy for parents to build friendships and support each other.

Today, that larger common rhythm is missing.

The lives of working parents are usually described in the official language as a "balancing" or "juggling" act. The metaphor suggests that today's families must learn to keep more balls in the air, more plates spinning. These balls and plates represent paid work, housework, children, civic responsibilities and personal leisure.

The balancing metaphor defines the challenge facing parents as primarily technical. It says that parents *can* keep all the plates spinning if only they learn to be more efficient and organized. The metaphor is morally neutral. It doesn't draw distinctions among the balls and plates; they're all equally important.

Yet the parents I interviewed don't identify with the official metaphor. They don't think all the balls and plates are the same. And they don't think their dilemma can be resolved through technical virtuosity.

I asked parents: What do you see as your most basic responsibilities as a parent? There was virtual unanimity in the response: "Putting a roof over my children's heads" and "teaching my kids right from wrong."

Today, the responsibility to provide materially for children is a heavy one. It often takes two incomes to provide the basics, and it takes time to earn these in-

comes. Yet time is also what parents need to teach their children sound values, and the demands of the job rob parents of time.

Thus, as these parents see it, their two most basic responsibilities are on a collision course. This is a far more painful condition than the juggling metaphor would suggest, and certainly one that does not invite an easy optimism.

When we hear reports that Americans are spending less and less time reading the newspaper, we worry about the level of civic awareness and participation, the literacy rate and the weakening of the written word. Yet we haven't begun to consider what it means for parents to lose so much time with their children. What does the decline in family time, with its consequent loss of moral attention and community support, mean to society?

Last year, a bumper crop of 4 million babies was born, a number that the Census Bureau predicts will hold steady for several more years. Many of these babies will be born to baby boomers who have postponed childbearing for nearly a decade longer than their own parents.

Up until now, these baby boomers have been living quite comfortably within a culture that stresses materialism and individualism. They spent their early adulthood building careers, acquiring possessions and expressing their identity through the marketplace.

As they become parents, however, something changes. They discover that the values that guided them as young adults aren't very useful in raising children. The same culture that supported them as individuals, they are now realizing, is indifferent or even hostile to them as parents and to their children.

For raising children isn't an individual act. It is a social and communal enterprise, involving kin, neighbors, other parents, friends and many other unrelated adults. Hermits don't raise kids; villages do.

Some new parents will expect to rediscover the "village" of their childhood, intact and waiting for their own children. But they will soon discover that the culture of that time was not as durable as the Sears swing sets their fathers installed in the back yard. That culture was a fragile social construction, cobbled together by their own parents, who spent years as Little League coaches, Brownie troop leaders, Sunday School teachers, chauffeurs and chaperons.

Far from being well-maintained, this culture has fallen into disrepair in the last several decades, unappreciated by growing portions of grass-roots America and positively looked down on as unfashionable by much of official America.

Official America ought to take parents at their word and begin to look at the concerns that touch them most deeply. How can we help parents meet their responsibility to pass on values? How can we extend and strengthen the social network for parents and children? Through what kinds of self-help and advocacy efforts can a new generation of parents build a more hospitable culture for themselves and their kids?

Clearly, there is a role for public policy in helping create a more hospitable culture. A policy such as family leave, for example, is philosophically in step with parents' desire to play the primary role in shaping their children's values. Affordable child care is also essential.

But a policy agenda is not enough. Building a family-friendly culture will take a radical shift in our public philosophy.

It will oblige us to assign a new value to the family and to what parents contribute to the society — not merely as workers, not merely as consumers, but as the people who shape the next generation. It will oblige us to establish a strong connection between the public interest and the interest of parents and children, so that having and raising children is valued by the society as more than a mere "lifestyle" option. And it will oblige us to recognize and then to close the profound gap between the official family debate and the grass-roots conversation.

The Washington Post

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1990

William Raspberry

Grandma Knows Best

David Blankenhorn was only trying to find a fresh way of talking about the difficulties facing the American family today. But for me, at least, he has provided a way of looking at (and evaluating proposals to ameliorate) social problems of all sorts.

There are, he suggests in a recent issue of "Family Affairs," two categories of explanations for what has gone wrong with the family—and by (my) extension with much of the society:

1. Reagan closed the bathrooms.

2. Nobody listens to Grandma.

The inspiration for the first is the trend that finds more and more New Yorkers—"not just the homeless, or even the poor, but all manner of ordinary citizens"—urinating on the city sidewalks. One explanation for this dismaying trend is the shortage of public toilets and other public amenities occasioned by the Reagan-induced budget cuts.

By that explanation, says Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values, which publishes "Family Affairs," the source of the incivility of which public urination is one example "is not changing standards of personal behavior but instead those larger political and economic forces that, in effect, close the bathrooms."

In other words, the family crisis is not about families but about outside institutions (principally the workforce and the government) that "fail to respond to the new realities of contemporary family life: divorce, single-parent homes, the two-gender work force, teenage parenthood, latch-key children and so on." And the solution lies not in changing family behavior but in changing those larger institutions.

"Schools must help, not stigmatize, unwed teenage parents. Corporations must subsidize child care. Courts must confer equal legal status on alternative lifestyles. Government must provide a wide range of services and subsidies for children and families in need."

The second explanation stems from Blankenhorn's old-fashioned notion that "you will learn more about the American family from 10 randomly chosen grandmothers than you will from 10 randomly chosen family experts."

The experts, loath to make "value judgments," won't tell you that families headed by a father and a mother married to each other are best for children. Mother-only households are just one more alternative to the Ozzie and Harriett model that embraces fewer actual families with each passing year.

"Grandmothers," says Blankenhorn, "tend to be less shy about value judgments. They tend to say things like: 'People today care more about themselves and less about others.' 'They want everything now.' 'They are less willing to make sacrifices.' 'Children today are not taught a sense of right and wrong.' "

For Grandma, the problem is not the system but us: not mean-minded government but our own irresponsible behavior and our unwillingness to make children our top priority.

As with so many of these debates, both sides have valid points. Government policy does affect families in negative ways. Children's allowances, the norm in much of Europe, would help enormously to reduce the poverty of many American families. A full-employment policy or other policies calculated to increase employment opportunities for inner-city youth might greatly reduce the incidence of single-parent households, by rendering it economically sensible for women to marry the fathers of their children. Government aid, including increased funds for Head Start and college loans, would lift more families to middle-class status and, presumably, to middle-class standards of behavior. In other words, Reagan *did* close the bathrooms.

But a dearth of bathrooms is not the sole explanation for the behavior exemplified by urinating on the streets. A part of it—perhaps the major part—is the abandonment of the standards and values Grandma preached. Psychologists would talk about it in terms of "locus of control": whether we see our fate as subject to our own behavior or principally as a matter of outside influences, including luck. Grandma would say it in plainer language: You don't sit on your butt simply because you can't find the job of your dreams. You don't neglect your children simply because their needs conflict with your desire to have a good time. You don't disable the plumbing in your apartment or throw trash on your public-housing courtyard or use or sell drugs simply because life is unfair.

Blankenhorn would reduce the unfairness, even if it means an increase in his taxes. But in the final analysis, he insists, the grandmothers are right.

"Reagan can close public toilets, and I can and do vote against him because of it. But he does not—he cannot—cause me to urinate in public. Only I can decide to do that.

"And if what we as a society are doing to the family is the cultural equivalent of urinating in the street, then public policy alone is simply not enough to solve our dilemma."

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET, SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

The Evening Sun
Friday, November 23, 1990

Why parents are so afraid

WE RECENTLY experienced Halloween 1990. And who is scared? Not the children. We've made Halloween safe for children. We prepackage and X-ray their treats and restrict the number of houses they can visit. Or we take them off the streets altogether and send them to parties supervised by adults.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

It's the parents who are frightened. Recent research shows that parents today are truly afraid for their children. Increasingly, they fear that the streets are stalked by predators, on the look-out to hurt, steal or kill their children. This anxiety is widespread, not just among parents in drug-infested, gang-controlled neighborhoods, but also among parents in quiet, middle-class communities.

Social scientists and media commentators who discover this phenomenon seem genuinely perplexed by it. Isn't it odd, perhaps even neurotic and irrational, for parents to be so anxious and fearful? These experts miss the point.

In one recent survey conducted at the Mayo Clinic, 72 percent of parents expressed fear that their child would be abducted by a stranger. The study concludes that such fears are widely exaggerated, since the actual chance of a child being abducted by a stranger is only about one in 1.5 million. Other studies have demonstrated conclusively that abductions and the sexual abuse of children by strangers are not very common occurrences. Yet for some reason, these reassuring statistics fail to comfort parents.

Recently I conducted focus group discussions with middle class parents in Baltimore. I wanted to find out what matters to parents today — what they are thinking about the family as a social institution and about rearing children in the 1990s. I was completely surprised to discover what worries these parents most.

It is not the shortage of day care, or how much they are earning, or what the government is doing, or the state of the economy, or the quality of the public schools. Their principal worry is that their children will vanish off the streets, kidnapped by a "crazy" or a "pervert".

In the Baltimore study, as elsewhere, there is little relationship between the fear of abduction or molestation and the actual incidence of these crimes. Asked whether they had actually experienced or witnessed such crimes in their own communities, the Baltimore parents said no.

Parents know that it is much harder to be a child today than when they were growing up. When they look at the world from their child's vantage point, they see uncertainty, change and danger.

But when I challenged them to explain a fear that seemed groundless, the parents were adamant. It was happening even in "nice, safe little places in the Midwest," so "why not here?" One mother said: "Where my son used to play, I'm always looking out the window. And if I can't see him, you know, I'm screaming his name. I get so terrified someone's going to steal him." Another warned: "There's crazy people out there. They might not be next door, but they're out there someplace."

What tells us more about our society: the facts or the fears? Who should we trust: the parents or the statistics? I believe that it is a grave mistake for experts, policy-makers and the media to dismiss parental fears of child abduction as foolish or irrational.

These parents know something. They know that, in a few highly publicized cases, the dangers to children in our society do take the form of child abduction, sexual abuse and even murder.

But they also know something more than that — something that may escape the attention of the experts who study them. They know that it is much harder to be a child today than when they were growing up. When they look at the world from their child's vantage point, they see uncertainty, change and danger. They sense, in short, that their children are growing up in an increasingly menacing, predatory environment.

So when parents express their fears of abduction, they speak symbolically as well as literally, poetically as well as statistically. They know the narrow definition of child abuse. But they know the broader definition as well. They know the danger of crime, but they also recognize a larger and more insidious danger: the danger of our cultural assault on children.

This assault comes in the form of an increasingly aggressive consumer economy that grabs even the youngest children with alluring promises of popularity and success, if only they will buy the right brand of sneakers and stone-washed jeans.

It comes in the form of a precocious peer culture, where girls want to be thin at age 9 and seductive at 11; where children talk about "doing it together" at age 12; and where sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, pregnancy and the threat of AIDS are all part of teen life in America.

It comes in the form of a hands-off, me-first adult society, where children are the exclusive "problem" of parents rather than a responsibility we all share — a society that is increasingly unwilling to make those sacrifices necessary to foster good outcomes for children.

In such an unfriendly culture, parents today are both frightened and angry at their growing helplessness to protect their children, not just against "crazies" and "perverts," but against a society that peddles greed, sex and violence every day.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, a social historian, is a research associate at the Institute for American Values, a New York-based organization concerned with family issues.

INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES
250 WEST 57th STREET, SUITE 2415
NEW YORK, NY 10107 • (212) 246-3942

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1991

The GOP and the Family Issue: A Swedish Lesson

By Allan Carlson

The GOP has held a near-exclusive claim on the "pro-family" mantle for the past dozen years, albeit with little effect. Family-oriented measures have been on the back-burner since the opening day of Ronald Reagan's first term, waiting for the "right moment" that never comes. Smugly complacent, the presidents' men have asked: "Where else can the social conservative go? To the Democrats?"

As an answer, I offer a story of long ago and far away. Shortly after 1900, sociologists began to document an accelerating decay in Sweden's family life. The birth-rate was tumbling, and growing numbers of young adults were unmarried.

Among the politicians, there appeared to be little concern among the socialists. Swedish conservatives, though, found an issue here. They linked the problem to the fracturing of the Christian world view and demanded action. In the 1908-16 period, the Conservative Party pushed proposals for a punitive tax on bachelors and the childless, an idea that foundered on the opposition of (libertarian-style) Liberals. The only conservative family measures to win approval were 1911 laws that prohibited the sale or distribution of contraceptives.

The conservatives tried again in 1931, proposing a special family tax deduction. As a party spokesman explained, "It is high time that we abandon the negative or indifferent position . . . and instead seek through positive measures to promote family creation and to ease the tax burden of large families." Yet this initiative also collapsed, the more pragmatic figures on the right fretting over the negative fiscal impact of a tax cut for families.

In 1932, the Social Democrats won control of the government. Yet with the social crisis growing, conservatives were confident. The family was "their issue." That decades had passed without real achievement on their part seemed trivial alongside the left's avoidance of the question.

In truth, though, not all of the left was asleep. "Idea journals" were filled during the 1920s with probing, unorthodox articles on family and population issues. In 1931, the socialist quarterly Tiden carried an essay that marked a breakthrough on the family issue. It focused on the growing economic and social pressures faced by young couples, linked their plight to blind market forces, and used their problems to justify a new round of state activism.

In 1934, two young Swedish socialists, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, fleshed out this approach in a book that transformed the family debate overnight. Wistful conservative sentiments about the family fell before a rigorous and compelling (if subtly flawed) argument that the right was unprepared to answer.

With stunning speed, the "family" became a Social Democratic issue. When new elections were held in 1936, it was that party that was able to posture as pro-motherhood, pro-child, pro-family and pro-birth. In a sweeping victory, the Social Democrats crushed the conservatives and ruled the country for 40 years, enacting policies that significantly shifted responsibility for children from the family to the state.

Might history repeat itself? The growing indifference of the GOP leadership toward the family issue has left the door open to a historic political realignment, signs of which are already evident.

The Institute for American Values and the Progressive Policy Institute represent a new breed of Democratic thinking, with family at its core. In recent weeks, Rep. Pat Schroeder (D., Colo.) crossed a symbolic line, endorsing a bipartisan measure that would raise the personal income-tax exemption for each child to $3,500. Taking a more partisan tack, Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (D., Tenn.) and Rep. Thomas Downey (D., N.Y.) are chief sponsors of a bill featuring a refundable $800-per-child tax credit. Meanwhile, Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder is endorsing concepts long absent from Democratic brains: chastity and fidelity.

Word has it that the White House is undaunted. Indeed, it may turn out that the president will counter these initiatives by being the one public figure opposed to new tax breaks for kids. Wrapped in the mantle of The Budget Agreement and wearing his OMB eyeshade, he will battle the sentimental spendthrifts in the name of fiscal responsibility. After all, the Democrats are playing with mirrors, and the family will always be a Republican issue.

Perhaps so. Then again, Swedish conservatives once thought that way, too.

Mr. Carlson is president of the Rockford Institute, based in Rockford, Ill., and author of "The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics" (Transaction, 1990).

The Washington Post

Sunday, June 16, 1991

'Two Faces of Fatherhood'

Dads Become More Domesticated, More Distant

By Paul Taylor
Washington Post Staff Writer

Michael Waterhouse calls it the "hour of dread." It arrives every other Sunday night, when another weekend pass into fatherhood expires.

"All day Sunday, I have this clock ticking in my mind, because I've got to get the kids back by 9 p.m.," said Waterhouse, who lost custody of his children, now ages 12, 10 and 2, when he and his wife separated a year and a half ago.

"When we all get in the car, there's this terrible silence. They don't know what to say to me, any more than I know what to say to them. I wind up using the L-word about a million times more than I did when I was in their lives every day."

Waterhouse, 42, is a modern father in more ways than he cares to count on this Father's Day, 1991. A "room mother" in his 10-year-old daughter's elementary school, and a passable cook and homemaker, he is more domesticated than were fathers of a generation ago. But he's also out of his childrens' lives 12 days out of every 14.

Fatherhood has been evolving along these separate paths—the nurturant father and the absent father—for three decades. What University of Pennsylvania sociologist Frank F. Furstenberg Jr. calls the "two faces of fatherhood" occasionally coexist in the same man, although the overlap often is a breeding ground for heartache, as Waterhouse's *angst*-ridden ruminations attest.

For the most part, however, men have reacted in opposite ways to the upheavals that have undermined their traditional "good provider" role as head of the household.

With most of the social stigma gone from divorce and non-marital birth, and with two-thirds of all mothers now bringing home a paycheck, fatherhood has become more of a voluntary commitment than ever.

Men who accept it are likely to seek closer bonding with their children than did the more emotionally disengaged fathers of a generation ago. Men who reject it find it easier than ever to drop out, be pushed out or never enter their children's lives.

"We don't have a single, compelling social story of fatherhood anymore, so there's a lot of confusion out there," said David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values, a New York-based think tank devoted to family issues. "We've got two new models—Mr. Mom and the Deadbeat Dad—but neither is satisfying. Mr. Mom is rooted in a feminist critique of traditional fatherhood. The Deadbeat Dad is the story of the flight of the modern male from family responsibility.

"Lots of baby-boomer fathers are self-congratulatory when they compare themselves to the dads of the 1950s, the kind who would never dream of changing a diaper. But even if they were emotionally distant, those '50s dads weren't morally distant. They were home every night. Not enough of today's dads are around their kids enough to be a moral presence."

Some social commentators believe that the trouble with modern fatherhood has deeper roots. "The love unit most damaged by the Industrial Revolution has been the father-son bond," wrote poet Robert Bly in "Iron John," a book whose surprising charge to the top of the bestseller list this year helps make its own point that fatherhood is suffering from an identity crisis.

Bly argued that when work and home became spatially separated a century ago, boys stopped seeing or understanding the work their fathers did. Many adopted their mother's disapproving view of masculinity; others compensated for their father's absence by becoming hypermasculine and violence-prone.

Father absence carries heavy social costs, many experts on children agree. A child in a female-headed household is six times more likely to be poor than a child in a two-parent family. More than 70 percent of the youths in juvenile correctional facilities come from fatherless homes, as do more than 80 percent of adolescents in psychiatric hospitals.

Because of the tripling of the divorce rate and the quadrupling of the out-of-wedlock birthrate, men between ages 20 and 49 spend an average of only seven years living in a house with young children, a decline of nearly 50 percent in the past 30 years.

While it affects all strata of society, fatherlessness is most acute in the black inner city, where child-rearing within marriage has become a relative rarity, and where homicide has become the leading killer of young men. "It's not just the absence of a stable adult male figure from a single household that does so much damage in these communities," said Mercer Sullivan, a research associate at the New School for Social Research in New York.

who has been studying the inner city for the past 30 years. "At the neighborhood level, when you have lots of households where fathers are not present, the whole social order breaks down. Teenagers take over the streets."

Sullivan said he believes the main reason inner-city fathers fail to stay connected to their children's lives is economic. "I have never encountered young men in the inner city who brag about not taking care of their kids," he said. "You do hear them bragging all the time about their sexual conquests, but most of them get the message that they're supposed to provide for their children. And many of them try to, at least for a while. But then one circumstance or another comes along in their very chaotic lives, and they can't provide for them. They hear loud and clear from the baby's mother or grandmother that they aren't welcome in the house unless they show up with a paycheck. It becomes another failure in their lives. They drop out of the picture."

═

Contrast that portrait with this one:

The family is gathering for a Sunday backyard barbecue when dad gets a call from the office. He has to go to work, he tells his disappointed son, who had been looking forward to an after-dinner game of catch. But wait! "Going to work" turns out to be nothing more than faxing some papers from home to the office. Dad's back at the barbecue in time to flip the burgers.

The scene is from a new television commercial for US West, a Denver-based regional phone company. It is a mix of corporate PR and product salesmanship, based on polling data showing that as baby-boomer men are belatedly entering fatherhood, they are rejecting the corporate "power hours" of the 1980s and yearning for more time at home.

The family-work tension is no longer exclusively a woman's burden: 72 percent of working fathers report feeling conflict between the two, up from 12 percent in 1978, according to James A. Levine, director of the Fatherhood Project of the Families and Work Institute, a New York-based research organization.

Corporate press releases today are full of accounts of employers who have responded to these concerns with family-friendly policies such as flextime, telecommuting and job sharing. But Levine remains skeptical.

"Men are caught between today's different set of expectations about what it means to be a father and yesterday's old set of rules in the workplace," he told a congressional panel last week. "I talked to one expectant father at a progressive company who told me that when he made plans to use the company's new parental leave policy—widely praised in the business press—his manager said, 'Bob, let me speak to you as a friend, not a boss. I know you're entitled to parental leave, but take vacation days instead. If you take a leave, you'll be branded around here forever as uncommitted.' "

"Men still find it easier to tell a boss that they had a flat tire on the way to work than to admit that they had to take a sick child to the doctor," agreed Lynn O'Rourke Hayes, coauthor of "The Best Jobs in America for Parents."

But as family roles change, the work culture is bound to catch up, Hayes said, especially when so many television commercials keep drawing a road map into the new androgyny of parenthood. Consider this Folgers coffee commercial. A young father is capnapping in an easy chair at daybreak with a sleeping baby in his arms. Mother arrives with a wake-up cup of coffee. "The baby was up all night/you've got to make the morning bright," goes the jingle. Forty years ago the scene would have been the same, but with the roles reversed.

═

When Waterhouse and his wife separated in late 1989, he sought joint legal custody of their three children. The court-appointed master agreed with his wife that the dissolution of the marriage had been a time of high conflict, and that the pair would not be able to cooperate on major decisions affecting their children. She was awarded sole custody of the children, as women are in nearly all divorces. Waterhouse was left with minimum visitation rights: every other weekend, plus four weeks in the summer.

"It is the hardest thing I have ever had to go through, this feeling that you're outsider in your own kids' lives," Waterhouse said.

Despite his anguish, Waterhouse is among the small percentage of non-custodial fathers—about one-quarter—who pay their full child support. It amounts to $1,000 a month, plus $575 a month for alimony. "If I didn't pay, they ought to throw me in jail," he said. "I have no problem with that."

The more typical pattern is for fathers who don't get custody to feel frozen out of their children's lives, or guilty about their own noninvolvement, and eventually to slack off on payment. According to a 1987 national survey of families and households, more than half of all children living apart from their divorced fathers had visited them just three times or less in the previous year.

David L. Levy, president of the National Council for Children's Rights, an organization of non-custodial parents, argues that courts should be more attuned to providing mediation services in divorce proceedings, in the hope of keeping both parents as involved as possible in their childrens' lives, post-divorce. "It stands to reason that when both parents are around, so are their wallets," he said.

Others are skeptical. "For most men, children and marriage are part of a package deal," said Johns Hopkins University sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin. "Their ties to their children depend on their ties to their wives, which are usually in pretty bad shape, once you get to a divorce."

It has not been easy for Waterhouse to stay part of his childrens' lives. He's moved out of the family house in suburban Maryland to a townhouse he shares with two other men, the only thing he could afford on his $46,000-a-year salary as a research librarian for the Congressional Research Service.

When his children visit, he sleeps on a couch and the they share a bedroom. "I hang up a bedsheet between my son and [older] daughter so they can have privacy, but the whole thing is pretty horrible."

Their weekends together are stuffed with activities—perhaps too many, Waterhouse acknowledged. "I suppose I have some of the Disneyland Dad guilt in me," he said.

Then there's the dreaded Sunday night trip back to Rockville. "My kids are terrific—very brave—but I often wonder during those long drives what they're thinking," he said. "I hope the reason they're not opening up to me is that they don't want to make me feel worse than they know I already do. But the silence scares me. And it makes me wonder, how's this going to affect them when they're grown up?"

PERSPECTIVE ON THE FAMILY

Los Angeles Times

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 1991

Motherhood Hits the Bottom Line

Pregnancy has become a business issue, counting mostly as a liability. This cultural turnabout bodes ill for our society.

By BARBARA DAFOE WHITEHEAD

Not since Lucy became pregnant with Little Ricky in 1952 have television viewers been so concerned with on-air pregnancy. Nearly a dozen television celebrities—including Deborah Norville, Maria Shriver, Connie Chung, Meredith Vieira and Katie Couric—tell us that they are pregnant, hoping to be pregnant or have had a baby.

In the intimacy that television now fosters between celebrity and viewer, one supposes that this would be happy news. Yet Chung, Norville and Vieira met with criticism and ridicule from network executives and other Establishment voices. These high-profile conflicts reflect what is happening in the ordinary workplace, where pregnancy and motherhood are considered distasteful problems, not achievements worthy of respect and celebration.

Today, an unprecedented number of women are both pregnant and employed; 71% will work during the last trimester. This trend is particularly strong among baby-boomer professional women now in their 30s and well-established in their careers. Between 1983 and 1986, the birth rate among all women over age 30 increased by 25%.

As on-the-job pregnancy increases, so does on-the-job discrimination. Last year, the Equal Employment Commission received 2,823 maternity-related complaints.

Legal actions represent only the tip of the iceberg. Pregnant workers frequently experience subtler forms of workplace discrimination: lost promotions and raises, less-challenging work assignments, patronizing or resentful co-workers and behind-the-back slurs about lack of professional commitment.

What do these trends tell us about our society? For many feminists and family policy advocates, the answer is obvious: Women still face discrimination on the job; and business and government must adopt new policies to promote and empower women in the workplace. This is the familiar answer, and there is much truth to it.

But these trends also point to another, perhaps deeper, social dilemma: the new degradation of pregnancy in America; our society simply does not favor or like pregnant women.

Among the most fundamental values of our culture today, especially among elites, are personal autonomy and marketplace achievement, accompanied by the idea that there is not, or at least-tought not to be, much significant difference between men and women. Quite simply, pregnancy is a biological insult to these values.

"No, he's not ours! We thought you'd brought him."

PUNCH

Historically, pregnancy has been a matter of dependency, family obligation and sexual difference. Expecting a child has been almost exclusively a family event, separate from the marketplace. Today, pregnancy is becoming a workplace event, mediated by the money world. The new attitude toward pregnancy, then, reflects a still broader change: the cultural tilt away from a family-based ethos and toward an employment-based ethos.

Consider the meaning of this shift. The family perspective understands pregnancy and childbirth as the central event of family life, to be welcomed with ceremony, thankfulness and celebration. It is a blessed event. The labor force perspective understands pregnancy as a workplace disruption that weakens employees' attachments to their jobs, increases absenteeism and reduces productivity. In the workplace, pregnancy is legally defined as a temporary disability, like a broken leg. It is less a blessed event than an economic problem. Even media stars are not exempt.

To understand this shift, imagine 10 grandmothers in one room, 10 corporate managers in another. Ask each group which words first come to mind when they hear the word *pregnancy.* The grandmothers will say words such as *expecting, happy, baby shower, baptism, excited, nursery, announcements, layette.* The managers will think of words such as *problem, productivity, staffing, benefits, absenteeism, unprofessional, disruptive, undependable, bottom line.*

The grandmothers' view used to be dominant in our society. Today, the business view is ascendant. Even expectant mothers are likely to view their condition with mixed feelings. Gone are the days when pregnant women exchanged secret smiles on the street. Now pregnancy itself is the big secret, as many women seek to hide their "disability" as long as possible, fearful of the reaction of bosses and co-workers.

This new cultural understanding of pregnancy carries profound social consequences. If you want to know how a society views children, find out how it views pregnant women. In celebrating pregnancy, a society stacks the deck in favor of children; it reinforces the mother's submission—and the father's—to the claims of the helpless child. If we weaken these cultural leanings, we promote an adult-centered society that is indifferent to the well-being of children. We cannot both love children and dislike pregnant women.

As we come to define pregnancy primarily as a career drawback and a drag on employee productivity, we worsen our already impoverished thinking about families and children. We call for the government to "invest" in children, yet we disinvest in children by devaluing parenthood as a vocation. We bemoan teen suicide, child obesity, innumeracy and falling test scores. At the same time, we don't fight for generous family-leave policies, not even for time off to confer with teachers during the school day. We call for a well-trained future work force to meet the challenges of the new century. But we continue to create pressures and incentives for parents, our society's most important teachers, to spend more and more time away from their children.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead is a research associate with the Institute for American Values in New York.

The Washington Post

MONDAY, JUNE 17, 1991

William Raspberry

No Substitute For the Family

Listen to the talk about the deteriorating American family, and you're likely to hear a threnody on single-parent households. It's true that fatherless families are in trouble, particularly when it comes to raising sons.

But a leading child-development expert cautions that two-parent families are in trouble, too—increasingly hard pressed to do the thing that human society has always relied on families to do: develop the competence and character of children.

You don't need Urie Bronfenbrenner to tell you that children need families. You don't even need him to tell you that they are better off if these families include fathers. The value of his recent essay in "Family Affairs," a publication of the Institute for American Values, is that it lays out in compelling detail just what it is that functional families do for their young. I only wish he had laid it out in simpler language. For instance:

"In order to develop—intellectually, emotionally, socially, and morally—a child requires participation in progressively more complex reciprocal activity, on a regular basis, over an extended period in the child's life, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual, irrational emotional attachment and who is committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life."

This proposition, the first of five he outlines in an essay called "What Do Families Do?", is not the simple sort of thing you commit to memory, post on your refrigerator or summarize accurately in a newspaper column. But each of the elements is, in Bronfenbrenner's view, essential. It isn't enough just that a child receives intellectual and emotional stimulation; the stimulation must be mutual, increasingly complex, regular and enduring—like a ping-pong game between familiar partners: faster, more complicated and more satisfying with each session.

The "irrational emotional attachment" is similarly essential; parent and child have to be crazy about each other.

Or take his proposition that the success of this vital interaction depends "in substantial measure on the availability and involvement of another adult, a *third party* who assists, encourages, spells off, gives status to, and expresses admiration and affection for the person caring for and engaging in joint activity with the child."

Children, in short, don't do as well in single-parent homes.

Says Bronfenbrenner, the Cornell professor generally recognized as the architect of Head Start, children growing up in fatherless households "are at greater risk for experiencing a variety of behavioral and educational problems, including extremes of hyperactivity or withdrawal, lack of attentiveness in the classroom, difficulty in deferring gratification, impaired academic achievement, school misbehavior . . . , suicide, vandalism, violence and criminal acts."

The reason, he says, is not the poverty associated with single-parent families but the "impaired parent-child interaction."

So why is it that so many children who grow up in mothers-only homes nevertheless manage to avoid the problems Bronfenbrenner talks about? Research, he says, discloses an "immunizing factor" that makes up for the father's absence. "Children of single-parent mothers are less likely to experience developmental problems in those families in which the mother experiences strong support from other adults living in the home or from nearby relatives, friends, or neighbors; members of religious groups; and when available, staff members of family support and child-care programs."

Surprisingly, what seems to matter most is not the attention the third party adult gives the child but the assistance, encouragement and respect given the mother herself.

Even intact families, according to Bronfenbrenner, are increasingly beset by disruptive factors that make child-rearing difficult: instability, inconsistency and the stresses of personal and professional life.

"Once again, the observed consequences are educational impairment and behavioral problems, including long-term effects that now also encompass children of the well-educated and the well-to-do."

The assaults on the family have grown beyond the ability of most parents to combat them by, for instance, simply making wiser choices. And the proposals for such "pro-family" government policies as bigger children's allowances, family tax credits and employer-provided day-care, while obviously helpful, don't reach the heart of the problem.

What Bronfenbrenner is talking about is as important to human social ecology as the more publicized environmental problems are to physical survival. And it demands attention at every conceivable level of human activity.

The combination of family incompleteness, family breakup and family stress is undermining what has emerged across cultures and millennia as the indispensable institution for the development of competence and character in children: the family.

Greenville Herald Banner, Wednesday, June 19, 1991

Greenville, Texas

Experts should listen to parents a bit more often

Guest Comment

By Barbara Dafoe Whitehead
Special to the Herald Banner

Recent research shows that parents today are truly afraid for their children. Increasingly, they fear that the streets are stalked by predators, on the lookout to hurt, steal, or kill their children. This anxiety is widespread, not just among parents in drug-infested, gang-controlled neighborhoods, but also among parents in quiet, middle-class communities.

Social scientists and media commentators who discover this phenomenon seem genuinely perplexed by it. Isn't it odd, perhaps even neurotic and irrational, for parents to be so anxious and fearful? These experts miss the point.

In one recent survey conducted at the Mayo Clinic, 72 percent of parents expressed fear that their child would be abducted by a stranger. The study concludes that such fears are widely exaggerated, since the actual chance of a child being abducted by a stranger is only about one in 1.5 million. Other studies have demonstrated conclusively that abductions and the sexual abuse of children by strangers are not very common occurrences. Yet for some reason, these reassuring statistics fail to comfort parents.

Recently I conducted focus group discussions with middle class parents in Baltimore. I wanted to find out what matters to parents today — why they are thinking about the family as a social institution and about raising children in the 1990s. I was completely surprised to discover what worries these parents the most. It is not the shortage of day care, or how much they are earning, or what the government is doing, or the state of the economy, or the quality of the public schools. Their principal worry is that their children will vanish off the streets, kidnapped by a "crazy" or a "pervert."

In the Baltimore study, as elsewhere, there is little relationship between the fear of abduction or molestation and the actual incidence of these crimes. Asked whether they had actually experienced or witnessed such crimes in their own communities, the Baltimore parents said no.

But when I challenged them to explain a fear that seemed groundless, the parents were adamant. It was happening even in "nice safe little places in the Midwest," so "why not here?" One mother said: "Where my son used to play, I'm always looking out the window. And if I can't see him, you know, I'm screaming his name. I get so terrified someone's going to steal him." Another warned: "There's crazy people out there. They might not be next door, but they're out there someplace."

What tells us more about our society: the fact or the fears? Who should we trust: the parents or the statistics? I believe that it is a grave mistake for experts, policymakers, and the media to dismiss parental fears of child abduction as foolish or irrational.

These parents know something. They know that, in a few highly publicized cases, the dangers to children in our society do take the form of child abduction, sexual abuse, and even murder. But they also know something that may escape the attention of the experts who study them. They know that it is much harder to be a child today than when they are growing up. When they look at the world from their child's vantage point, they see uncertainty, change and danger. They sense, in short, that their children are growing up in an increasingly menacing, predatory environment.

So when parents express their fears of abduction, they speak symbolically as well as literally, poetically as well as statistically. They know the narrow definition of child abuse. But they know the broader definition as well. They know the danger of crime, but they also recognize a larger and more insidious danger: the danger of our cultural assault on children.

This assault comes in the form of an increasingly aggressive consumer economy that grabs even the very youngest children with alluring promises of popularity and success, if only they will buy the right brand of sneakers and stone-washed jeans. It comes in the form of a precocious peer culture, where girls want to be thin at age nine and seductive at age 11; where children talk about "doing it together" at age 12; and where sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, pregnancy, and the threat of AIDS are all part of teen life in America. It comes in the form of a hands-off, me-first adult society, where children are the exclusive "problem" of parents rather than a responsibility we all share — a society that is increasingly unwilling to make those sacrifices necessary to foster good outcomes for children.

In such an unfriendly culture, parents today are both frightened and angry at their growing helplessness to protect their children, not just against "crazies" and "perverts," but against a society that peddles greed, sex, and violence every day of the year.

Dr. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, a social historian, is a Research Associate at the Institute for American Values in New York.

The Des Moines Register

Time for kitchen-table language about children

Commission report places emphasis on cultural values

JUL 26 '91

By BARBARA DAFOE WHITEHEAD

In late June, almost everybody who watches television or reads newspapers learned of the recently completed work of the National Commission on Children, the 34-member group created several years ago by the Democratic Congress and the Republican White House to investigate the condition of children in America and to make recommendations. But reports of the commission's work, while unusually extensive, also have been quite predictable.

Media accounts have focused almost exclusively on legislation and the politics of legislation. Will Congress follow the commission's recommendations to increase spending on children? Will Republicans continue to resist the proposal, endorsed by a majority of commissioners, to guarantee health care for all children? Are Democrats stealing the family issue from Republicans? Will Senator John D. Rockefeller, the commission chairman, use the report to seek the Democratic presidential nomination next year?

Consensus on values

Unfortunately, these stories ignore or dismiss what is historically and philosophically most important about this commission: its new consensus on cultural values. This consensus represents a breakthrough for children's commissions and initiates a new period of public thinking about children and their families.

Dozens of commissions on children and families have come and gone, all prompted by a sense of alarm over the worsening condition of American children. Though these commissions have differed somewhat in size and scope, they typically have shared a common feature. On the one hand, they have called upon the nation to express its moral commitment by expanding public services for children. On the other hand, they have been unwilling to appeal to individuals to express moral commitment through private behavior. During the past two decades, such commissions typically have refused to consider, much less agree on, the forms of private family behavior that ought to be valued and pursued as cultural norms.

$1,000 tax credit

The National Commission on Children breaks with this tradition. Its major public-policy proposal does not call for new or expanded services. The $1,000-per-child tax-credit proposal affirms parental responsibility and widens parental choice. By putting money into the hands of families, the tax credit empowers parents, not providers and bureaucrats.

The commission's 519-page report is filled with the language of moral values. It calls upon all Americans — but particularly parents — to foster a "culture of character" for children. It exhorts parents to spend more time with their children and to become better "guardians of their children's moral development." It worries about the influence of rock music and sex and violence on television. It urges parents to take to the phones, the schools and the malls to protect their children against corrupting values, messages and images.

This is not the official language of insider politics and legislative analysis. It is the everyday language of the kitchen table. This type of language is unfamiliar to many sophisticated observers who do not care much about any idea that does not have an obvious "policy implication." It clearly irritated the editors of The New York Times, who opined that the commission's final report, despite containing some interesting legislative recommendations, "swims in platitudes." Exactly.

Perhaps its most important platitude comes in a chapter called "Taking a Stand," in which the commissioners make a moral statement that no prior commission has been willing to make. "Children do best when they have the personal involvement and material support of a father and a mother and when both parents fulfill their responsibility to be loving providers. There can be little doubt that having both parents living and working together in a stable marriage can shield children from a variety of risks. Rising rates of divorce, out-of-wedlock childbearing and absent parents are not just manifestations of alternative lifestyles, they are patterns of adult behavior that increase children's risk of negative consequences."

Fourteen years ago, another prestigious children's commission, the Carnegie Council on Children, offered a different view of the effects of single-parenthood. In a report that did not swim in platitudes about the state of the culture and moral values, the commissioners found that "the financial effects of divorce on children, though still very bad, are by no means disastrous. . . . The greater availability of jobs for women means that more middle-class children today survive their parents' divorce without a catastrophic plunge into poverty."

Two-parent family

For the liberals who served on the National Commission on Children, the unambiguous affirmation of the advantages of the married, two-parent family represents a major turning point. During recent decades, liberals have, in effect, viewed children as a stand-alone constituency. They have sought to serve this constituency primarily through public programs. They failed to view children as this commission does — as family members whose well-being is largely dependent on the actions of their parents. Moreover, as unwed parenthood and divorce have increased, liberal elites frequently have endorsed the notion that the new family forms are just as good as the nuclear family, and that children raised by one parent do just as well as those raised by two. To suggest otherwise, went the logic, would be to stigmatize single parents and blame the victim.

These views are radically at odds with the views of most ordinary Americans. Most Americans believe, as this commission believes, that some family forms are better for children than others. In focus-group discussions I have conducted with parents, the best-informed and most-articulate critics of single-parenthood are single parents, particularly single mothers. This gap between elite and popular views of the family contributes to the plight of liberals: Many Americans consider them to be moral wimps.

End of partisan wrangling

However, as part of this new cultural consensus on the family, liberals are able to move much closer to the thinking of the American public and solve the problem of moral wimpishness.

Consequently, the commission report deserves to be regarded as more than a political event, more than the conventional policy offerings. It is an important intellectual event that marks the end of decades of partisan wrangling over the relationship between cultural values and child well-being.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead is a research associate at the Institute for American Values, a New York organization that does research on family issues. She is the author of a recent Institute paper, "Noble Failures: A Critical History of Family Commissions."

OUR TOWN
Published by
Our Town Newspaper Corp.
451 East 83rd Street NYC 10028
Manhattan's No. 1 Weekly Newspaper

VOL. 21 • NO. 20 • September 9, 1990

For a Gentle City

Grandparents should be seen, heard and heeded

By BETTE DEWING

Travel is broadening, especially by train, where you see this fabulous country closeup and get to meet people from varied backgrounds and places. Lots of grandparents travel by train to see geographically-distant adult offspring and grandkids. And when they bring out the photos, their eyes light up as they recite stories about family members. It's very clear the bond with sons, daughters and grandkids is the enduring and indispensable kind.

But these family loves are rarely portrayed in our custom-shaping electronic and print mediums, even in the shamefully few which target the older audience.

The opportunity to read out-of-state newspapers is also broadening. Most fortunately, I was in Los Angeles when the *LA Times* ran an Op Ed piece called "Listen to Your Grandmother," by David Blankenhorn, president of the New York-based "Institute for American Values," an organization concerned with strengthening families (250 W. 57th, NYC 10107 - tel. 246-3942).

Social programs are not enough to stop the breakdown of family life, warns Blankenhorn, "because the root of the problem is cultural, not economic or political...the 'family deficit' problem is probably more dangerous than our trade or budget deficits." The usual changes in institutional and government policies don't address the heart of the matter as truly as another perspective, "which might be termed Grandmother knows best" solution. "You will learn more about the American family from 10 grandmothers than from 10 family experts" such as a single parent family is not "just as good as" a two-parent home; that children aren't taught right from wrong; that people aren't as willing to make sacrifices as they once were; and that children shouldn't bear children.

So the problem is with us, says Blankenhorn. "Parents not spending enough time with their kids. People seeing family obligations as an obstacle to self-fulfillment rather than a pathway to it..."

I would add that some grandfathers I know such as my cousins Sam Workman and Paul Sperry share these opinons and so do many others who don't happen to be grandparents or parents.

The big problem is that grandparents, and all who share such commonsense views, aren't given the opportunity to air them on a public level and are subtly and not so subtly discouraged on a private level.

Grandparents Day is September 9, always the first Sunday after Labor Day, but most calendars don't show it. And prime time TV shows don't include grandparents (if only Bill Cosby's new family member were a grandparent and not another youngster). The last thing the *Golden Girls* have on their minds is grandmotherly love. Grandparents don't figure in the once happily intergenerational daytime soaps whose focus is mostly on violence and lust. With all the concern with racial bias, little is said about the ubiquitous bias, towards being no longer young, and against intergenerational family ties and the sort of grandmotherly views expressed in David Blankenhorn's essay.

In an interview with Maria Gorbachev, we learn her son Mikhail hasn't visited her in over three years. Thanks to Erma Bombeck for picking up on this story, which shows generational segregation is alive and well behind the not so iron curtain. Gorbachev as a family man has a long way to go.

And *Modern Maturity*, which reaches millions of age 55+ Americans, rarely addresses the ongoing family connection need. In the August/September issue, Malcolm Boyd, Episcopal priest, writer and gay rights activist, in his column "People Needing People" (loneliness in later life stages), not once suggested that some of the people "needed" are offspring and grandkids.

Here's hoping some grandparents (and others) will correct this commonplace oversight (bias?) by writing *Modern Maturity* editors, 3200 E. Carson, Lakewood, Ca. 90712.

But the publication *Senior Summary* published by the New York Junior League never fails to address these fundamental needs. In its Summer issue, yours truly writes about the need for family love songs, and another piece on our mayor's concern with city elders, has the wonderful news that Dr. Prema Mathal-Davis, the new Commissioner of the Dept. for the Aging, "is a firm believer in the value of intergenerational activities," and persuaded her retired parents to move from India and live with her husband and their three youngsters in their Staten Island home! A subscription to the quarterly is $5 and copies are also available free at the Junior League, 130 East 80th Street 10021). Not for elders only.

I recently had a favorite snapshot of my dad and my Aunt Deed enlarged and framed. I was rueful that I had waited so long, and that relatively few photos of family elders are displayed in most homes, or brought out from wallets to show others. The revolution we need the most will be intergenerational, and the younger ones will say proudly, "Hey, I want to show you a picture of my dear mother, father, grandparent." You get the idea. Grandparents Day greetings!

Price $3.00

FIRST THINGS

August/September 1990
Number Five

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Worldly Wisdom, Christian Foolishness
Peter L. Berger

Wealth and Whimsy: On Economic Creativity
Richard John Neuhaus

How to Think About the Family
David Blankenhorn

Religion and the Life of Learning
Mark R. Schwehn

The Orthodox Jew as Intellectual Crank
David Singer

Also: Solzhenitsyn and Modern Literature • Equality After Socialism
Democracy and Obscenity • Hank Gathers and Cultural Christianity

Reviews and Opinion: Mary Ann Glendon on Laurence Tribe
Robert L. Wilken • Gerard V. Bradley • Lawrence M. Mead
Richard F. Duncan • Matthew Berke • Gilbert Meilaender

0 73361 64655 2 08

Featuring:

The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

FIRST THINGS
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1990 • NUMBER FIVE

THE ECONOMICS OF CHILD CARE

David Blankenhorn

Last October, after four years of intense debate, the U.S. Congress passed, and President Bush signed into law, the largest commitment ever made by the federal government to expanding the nation's quantity and quality of child-care programs. Over the next five years, Congress plans to increase spending on child care by a minimum of $22 billion. Most of the money will go directly to individual families in the form of tax credits; the remainder will create or expand state-level child-care programs and increase funding for Head Start, the national pre-school program for children of low-income families. Moreover, several new child-care initiatives are being considered by the current Congress. In particular, proposed family leave legislation would require companies to allow parents up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave to care for newly born, newly adopted, or seriously ill children. Over the past three years, family leave bills have already become law in over a dozen states.

David Blankenhorn is president of the Institute of American Values, a New York-based organization that conducts research on issues of family well-being, family policy, and civic values.

ECONOMICS OF CHILD CARE

In the private sector, too, child care is growing as both a concern and a priority. It is a concern due to the growing possibility of increased government regulation of employer-provided child care and related employee benefits. It has also become a priority as employers increasingly see child care as a possible key to recruiting and retaining valued employees during the tight labor markets of the 1990s. Sylvia Ann Hewlett's important new book, *When the Bough Breaks: The Social Costs of Neglecting Our Children*, documents the causes and dimensions of these corporate trends.

This emerging private-sector focus, centered on the economics of the labor force, also reflects the remarkable success of the "work-family" movement of the 1980s—a broad coalition of corporate consultants, policy think tanks, business leaders, legislative lobbyists, and others who seek, in the words of one prominent organization, "new approaches for balancing the changing needs of America's families with the continuing need for workplace productivity." A national work-family conference in 1988, entitled "Child Care: The Bottom Line," elaborates this perspective:

> Never before in the history of the United States has the issue of child care been so inextricably linked with the state of the nation's economy. Not only does the availability of affordable, high-quality child care affect the well-being of the majority of American families, it affects the bottom line of every business in the nation and ... inevitably ... affects the United States' ability to compete successfully in a global economy.

This approach became truly bipartisan during the 1980s, defining the discourse of Republicans as well as Democrats. The most influential child-care report of the Reagan administration, for example, organized by the Department of Labor, was entitled "Child Care: A Workforce Issue."

What do all of these laws, programs, and trends have in common? The answer is that competing child-care proposals in both Congress and the private sector derive largely, even if at times unknowingly, from implicit views about the "market" for child care. The key question is: Does the current "market"—defined as activity in which buyers and sellers of child care come together and in which supply and demand determine price—function in a way that satisfies today's families? Or is there a "market failure"—in particular, is there a shortage of supply—that must shape the actions of policymakers? This issue is the Gordian knot of today's child-care debate.

Yet, until very recently, there has been little scholarly analysis of how the child-care market actually works. Though the market for child care is large and expanding—over $15 billion in 1989, expected to reach $48 billion by 1995—the tools of economic analysis have remained oddly absent from the policy discussion of child care.

This economic illiteracy impoverishes the policy debate. It robs it of invaluable (even if partial) insights into how families make child-care decisions and into how proposed government interventions might affect those decisions. It also frequently allows rhetoric to dominate analysis—not a rare sin in government, but still a regrettable one. It is worth exploring, then, the economic ABCs of child care. How do families make child-care decisions? How is the current child-care market working? And, finally, how should the functioning of the child-care market affect the design of public policy?

HOW FAMILIES MAKE CHILD-CARE DECISIONS: AN ECONOMIC MODEL

The nation's most important child-care institution remains the family—families are not only the principal "consumers" of child care, but also by far the major providers of care. The data in table 1 document this point and illustrate the current trends in child-care arrangements.

When a child is born, a family faces a series of child-care decisions. An economic model can measure the ways in which these decisions are rooted in monetary concerns: What choices will maximize the family's overall economic well-being?

From such an economic perspective, a parent who stays at home to care for a child does not provide "free" child care, since the family must calculate the lost income that results from a parent's absence from the labor force. Similarly, as a parent's earning potential increases, so does the "cost" of working outside the labor market as a parent/homemaker. A range of such monetary considerations shape a family's child-care decisions. The major ones are:

- the cost of child care;
- the economic value of a parent's nonmonetized, nontaxable work at home—such as cleaning, cooking, and home repairs—that can accompany parental child care;
- the net wages of parental employment—that is, wages and benefits minus taxes and employment-related expenses such as child care;
- the long-term cost—defined as permanently lower earning potential—that may result from a parent's temporary absence from the labor force;
- the availability of unpaid child care, usually provided by grandparents or other relatives;

PRÉCIS

In both the private and public sectors, child care is becoming a critical issue. The availability of reliable, affordable day care is becoming an increasingly greater concern of both parents and their employers. Corporations have begun to appreciate the incentive that inexpensive, quality day care can be in attracting and holding employees.

To meet day-care costs in the public sector, Congress intends to increase child-care funding by at least $22 billion.

Underlying all the new efforts to meet rising day-care needs are differing ideas about child-care requirements and adequate answers to those requirements. Blankenhorn argues that the child-care "market" has not been satisfactorily studied—leaving the question of how the market works unanswered. His own findings show that, from an economic perspective, the child-care market is generally doing well and that there is no general shortage of child-care providers.

But how does the market function for the poor? Not well, according to the author. It often results in unfavorable and limited opportunities for their children. Blankenhorn believes that there is some evidence that well-constructed programs can help the nation's poorest families.

Table 1

Child-Care Situation of All Preschool Children

	1965	1977	1985
Mother not in labor force[1]	73.0%[2]	62.0%	51.0%
Mother employed,[3] child cared for by: (a) father or other relative in child's or relative's home.	16.5%	21.0%	23.5%
(b) Sitter in child's home	4.0%	2.5%	3.0%
(c) Nonrelative's family day care	4.5%	9.0%	11.0%
(d) Day-care center	1.5%	5.0%	11.5%

Source: Derived from data presented by Dr. Sandra L. Hofferth (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, Md.), in paper of July 1, 1987, presented to the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families.

1. Though we may infer that mothers are overwhelmingly the primary caregivers for children in this very large category, no study considered for this article offers precise documentation. A new study that may prove to be helpful is the *National Child Care Consumer Survey*, by the Urban Institute (Washington, D.C.), 1991.

2. The precise number of 1965 preschoolers with employed mothers is not known by the Census Bureau or Bureau of Labor Statistics. The figure used in this table is based on data from 1970, when 71 percent of all preschoolers had mothers not in the labor force.

3. "In the labor force" means holding, having recently held, or looking for a *full- or part-time* job on the day of the survey. "Employed" means holding a full- or part-time job on the day of the survey. Of all 1985 *employed* mothers of preschoolers, 38 percent worked part-time and 62 percent full-time, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987 Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 9, *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Winter 1984-85.*

- the opportunity for a parent to work while at home or to arrange flexible work schedules that help meet child-care needs;
- the economic value of subsidies for nonparental child care, provided either publicly (as in tax credits, direct payments, or below-market-price services) or privately (as in employer-assisted child care or below-market-price services from nonprofit institutions).

Of course, nonmonetary concerns also shape behavior in child care, as in everything else. Even economists know this. Norms of self-esteem and personal fulfillment, ideals about gender roles and gender equity, the perceived stigma of public assistance, the nonmonetary worth assigned to parental child care—values such as these can be equally if not more important determinants of child-care decisions.

Yet this economic model of child-care decision making provides an important foundation for the entire child-care debate. It helps explain some of the major

trends in family demographics—for example, the economic incentives of the past three decades that have increasingly favored the entry of mothers into the labor force.

As important, it can help provide a conceptual framework for policymakers—a set of tools to help policymakers understand how proposed government interventions in the child-care market are likely to influence family decision making and family well-being.

Not only does the availability of affordable, high-quality child care affect the well-being of the majority of American families, it affects the bottom line of every business in the nation.

THE CHILD-CARE MARKET: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Does the market work? Is the child-care market performing well? From a strictly economic perspective: Yes. Is there a general child-care shortage? Again, from an economic perspective: No.

But economists tend to be precise people who speak a specialized language. So when they say that the child-care market "works," they are making two specific and rather technical (and non-normative) judgments.

First, they are saying that *the supply of market child care is elastic*—it responds to changes in demand. Several demographic trends—more mothers working, the baby boomlet of the 1980s, and parents' desire for more preschool education—are fueling dramatic growth and variation in the demand for child care. As table 1 documents, increasingly fewer children are cared for by mothers (though more by relatives), while demand for slots in family day-care homes and (especially) day-care centers is rapidly increasing.

In response to these changes in demand, the number of licensed day-care slots has more than doubled over the past ten years. The number of family day-care homes is estimated to have increased by more than 40 percent over the same period. These data are presented in table 2.

In 1988 there were over sixty thousand licensed day-care centers nationwide, according to the Child Care Information Exchange—a very large increase since 1985. Moreover, the for-profit child-care industry is fragmented and thus very competitive: Only about a dozen companies operate more than twenty centers, while over 90 percent of all for-profit firms operate fewer than five centers. Start-up costs for new centers are typically $150,000 to $300,000; expanding the capacity of existing centers costs much less.

Overall, market child care in 1989 represented a $15.3 billion-per-year sector of the U.S. economy, up from $12 billion in 1986. It is expected to expand rapidly—many larger firms currently report yearly expansion rates of 11 to 17 percent—at least until the mid 1990s.

Second, economists report that *child-*

ECONOMICS OF CHILD CARE

care prices have remained stable during a period of rising demand.

For example, real hourly expenditures for center care, when adjusted for inflation, rose a modest 7 percent from 1975 through 1985, even as demand for center care rose sharply. Inflation-adjusted expenditures for family day care rose by 15 percent over the same decade—slightly more, but still not a major increase.

In 1985, one of every five families with an employed mother paid nothing for child care. Of those who paid, the average weekly payment—per child under age five for thirty hours of care—was $37. For full-time paid care, weekly payments averaged between $40 to $60.[1]

General assertions that the market is not working—that "there is a national shortage of child care"—appear frequently both in the media and the public policy debate. But despite their widespread acceptance and repetition, most such assertions do not withstand close inspection. Three commonly cited arguments for shortage are:

Contrasting the rising number of children with employed mothers with the (much smaller) number of licensed child-care slots. Yet most child-care arrangements are informal and unlicensed. Table 1, as well as other studies,

1. Congressional testimony by Dr. Sandra L. Hofferth (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, Md.) before the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families on July 1, 1987.

suggests that up to 75 percent of all preschoolers are cared for primarily by parents or in informal arrangements. Even among children with employed mothers, the number of children in day-care centers and family day care combined does not equal the number of children cared for by nonmother relatives. Of course, it is also true that families are turning to centers and family day care in increasing numbers; yet, as shown, the supply of those slots has increased dramatically over the past decade. No study has found significant numbers of preschool children left without care.

Child-care policy cannot be isolated from the deeper crises of family breakdown and dysfunction that increasingly define the nation's poverty dilemma.

Citing the length of waiting lists at child-care centers. Waiting lists are extremely poor indicators of supply. Many children on lists already receive care somewhere else. Many parents place names on more than one list. Nor are names always removed when other care is found. It is predictable—and certainly not evidence of shortage—that subsidized child-care slots (in nonprofit or government-supported centers, for example) might have waiting lists: Other things being equal, they are cheaper and so more desirable. Thus waiting lists may reflect certain preferences and trends but do not help to measure supply.

Citing surveys showing that more mothers would work if child care were "more affordable." Such surveys, insofar as they elicit meaningful information, mostly reflect the rational economic choices that parents make. They are only saying the obvious: New financial incentives might affect their behavior. This truism comforts economists but tells them nothing about the supply of market child care.

DOES THE MARKET WORK FOR POOR FAMILIES?

The child-care market for poor families merits the special attention of policymakers for four reasons. First, the new consensus on welfare reform, embodied in the federal Family Support Act of 1988, holds that most recipients, including mothers of young children, should work, attend school, or train for work as a condition of assistance. This new requirement obviously begs the question of child care. Full implementation of the new welfare law may, by itself, increase the national demand for nonmaternal child care by up to 10 percent.

More generally, for many parents in or near poverty, problems with child care can be a barrier to becoming and remaining employed. Thus child care becomes a component of any policy to help poor families achieve self-sufficiency through employment.

Also, a small but important body of research suggests that early childhood programs (such as Head Start) may offer important help—in cognitive and socioemotional growth—to young children from poor families. Thus child-care policy has special significance for the developmental needs of poor children.

Finally and perhaps most important, national poverty data for the 1980s confirm an alarming trend: Poverty in the United States is increasingly linked to family structure. This is the first decade in the nation's history in which a majority of all poor families are headed by women. About 40 percent of all poor Americans today are children.[2]

Thus family policy—not only child care, but the range of policies affecting family formation and family functioning—must be at the core of any antipoverty policy for the 1990s. Moreover, child-care policy, from this perspective, cannot be isolated from the deeper crises of family breakdown and dysfunction that increasingly define the nation's poverty dilemma.

A major 1989 study by Mathematica Policy Research provides the first detailed information about the child-care market for low-income families. The study examines the local child-care market in three low-income communities: Chicago (South Side); Newark, New Jersey; and Camden, New Jersey. Below are its key findings:

1. Child care in these poor communities is remarkably similar to child care in the nation as a whole. The proportion of preschoolers with working mothers, the types and distribution of child-care arrangements, the cost of care, the indicators of quality—all of the figures for these three communities closely mirror national patterns.

2. Parents are generally satisfied with their child-care arrangements. About 30 percent say they would ideally prefer a different arrangement—most frequently center care, and overwhelmingly in order to provide their children with a more educational experience. Parents say they base their choices on quality, location, and cost—in that order. Fewer than 5 percent cite cost as a reason for preferring alternative care.

3. Day-care centers currently operate at slightly below capacity (92 percent), while family day-care homes are surprisingly underused, operating at 45.5 percent of capacity.

4. Child care in these communities costs an average of $1.38 per hour, or a median of $50 per family per week. Child-care centers charge a per-child average of $35 to $40 weekly for nonpoor families, with somewhat higher fees for infant care, but with frequently reduced fees for low-income families. Family day-care providers charge an average of $1.40 to $1.90 hourly, or $56 to $76 for a forty-hour week. Again, these data parallel national estimates.

5. Licensed child care meets and exceeds state minimum standards for quality. The average group size in centers is fifteen children; the average child-staff ratio is six to one. In family day care, average child-staff ratio is three to one, with only 5 percent of providers caring for more than six children. Center staff generally have some postsecondary education, while fewer than 30 percent of family day-care providers have postsecondary education; over one third have not completed high school. Licensed child-care arrangements are reasonably stable. Only about 12 percent of preschoolers experienced a change in arrangement in the past year. Enrollment turnover in centers averaged 5 to 15 percent per three-month period.

2. U.S. Census Bureau, 1988.

6. In 70 percent of low-income female-headed families with preschoolers in these communities, the mother is not in the labor force. Nationwide, fewer than 5 percent of welfare mothers with young children work either part or full time. Of all purchasers of child care in these three communities, only 7.5 percent receive aid. Only 16 percent have family incomes under 150 percent of the poverty line—84 percent of all families at or near the poverty line, therefore, do not use market child care. They rely instead on maternal care or on unpaid care provided by relatives or neighbors. Very few poor mothers purchase child care in order to work.

This finding merits special attention, since it is precisely these mothers who will now be expected to work or train for work under reformed federal and state welfare laws. Why do these mothers, isolated from the national trend toward maternal employment, remain largely out of the labor force? Is a tight market for child care part of the reason? National estimates of child-care costs as a proportion of income are shown in tables 3 and 4. Clearly, for single low-income mothers with preschoolers, as well as for other poor families, the cost of child care is quite high—usually matched only by food and housing as a proportion of a family budget. Thus for these families—especially those who cannot look to relatives for care—the cost of child care may constitute one significant barrier to employment.

Table 2

Licensed Child Care

	1976	1986	Increase
Licensed centers	18,307	40,000	119%
Center capacity	1.01 million	2.10 million	108%
Licensed family day-care homes*	73,750	105,417	43%

Sources: S.L. Hofferth, and D. Phillips, "Child Care in the United States, 1970 to 1995," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Vol. 49, No. 3, August 1987); National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1986.

* An estimated 90 percent or more of all existing family day-care homes are not licensed or regulated by public policy - they operate informally, as part of the underground economy. Thus these data capture only a tiny fraction of total family day-care capacity, which by its nature is difficult to measure precisely.

7. About 19 percent of all mothers with preschoolers in these communities say they would seek employment if "acceptable" and "affordable" child care were available. Yet these mothers' definitions of "affordable"—$51 to $70 per week—closely resemble actual prevailing market costs in their communities. Thus "affordability" alone, at least for most mothers, would not seem to be the sole barrier. Nor would availability alone, given the large excess capacity of existing family day-care homes.

Perhaps the problem is access to pro-

Table 3

Percent of Family Income Spent on Child Care in Three Low-Income Areas in 1985 - Two-Parent Families with Mother Employed and Youngest Child under Age Five

All families	10%
Families below poverty line	22%
Families with income over $40,000	5%

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, 1989.

Table 4

Percent of Mother's Income Spent on Child Care in Three Low-Income Areas in 1985 - Female-Headed Families with Mother Employed and Youngest Child under Age Five

All mothers	23%
Mothers below poverty line	32%
Mothers above poverty line	21%

Source: Mathematica Policy Research, 1989.

viders: Most providers, both centers and family-care homes, neither advertise nor actively recruit to fill empty slots. The child-care market operates very informally, depending mostly on word of mouth and referrals by relatives and neighbors. Moreover, for those would-be employed mothers who would accept center care (but not family day care), access to providers may be a larger barrier, in light of the near-capacity operation of most centers.

Perhaps also, some would-be employed parents confront not one distinct barrier to employment—child care—but instead multiple and related barriers: lack of child care, but also (and perhaps more importantly) lack of education, lack of work history, lack of familiarity with finding child care, personal and family difficulties, or other problems.

In sum, the child-care market in low-income communities looks very similar to child-care markets everywhere else. Oddly, its most distinct characteristic is its lack of distinguishing characteristics.

Regarding poor families in those communities, several conclusions stand out. The vast majority of poor, mother-headed families—more than eight in ten—do not use market child care at all. Most of the mothers are not in the labor force, and, of those who are, most rely on care by relatives or other highly informal arrangements.

Family day-care homes operate at only about 45 percent of reported capacity. These homes may absorb much of any future increase in demand for market care, since they are both currently underutilized and also less expensive than centers. However, most are not licensed, which raises questions about quality. And the market for their services is very informal, which can cause problems of access, especially for low-income families.

Poor families who do purchase child care spend a very high proportion of their income on it: more than twice the national average. Policymakers must decide whether these trends are consistent with

sound social policy—especially given the demonstrated benefits of early childhood programs for poor children.

Finally, a majority of at-home poor mothers with preschoolers—who will be increasingly expected to enter the labor force as part of welfare reform—point to child care as a barrier to employment. Yet, in fact, care appears to be available at costs they deem affordable. The problem appears to be lack of access, due to the market's informality—perhaps along with the fact that, at least in some cases, lack of child care is but one component, or even one symptom, of deeper and more complex barriers to achieving self-sufficiency through employment.

Child care becomes a component of any policy to help poor families achieve self-sufficiency through employment.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

How might the new data and economic analyses summarized here contribute to the national policy debate on child care? As a framework for the policy debate, consider three possible conclusions.

One. The market is working just fine. Government should not intervene any further—if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Two. For most families, the market functions well, but it generates bad outcomes for the poor—barriers and restricted options for the very children and parents who most need high-quality child care. Government should target better programs, and more child-care purchasing power, toward these families.

Three. The market may be working in some pure economic sense, but it cannot produce the kind of child care that is necessary — care that meets the experts' standards for quality; or care that meets parents' needs and desires; or care that promotes gender equity and equal access to the workplace. A purely economic analysis leaves out these all-important "externalities." Therefore, substantial government intervention in the market is necessary in order to address these challenges.

My own reading of the evidence suggests a combination of the first and second conclusions. For most families, the child-care market seems to function well, offering a wide and growing range of services at a range of prices. Government efforts to control or further regulate this market, as implied in the third conclusion, may have the harmful result of narrowing parental choice and reducing parental control—in effect, replacing parental decisions with governmental decisions. At the same time, there is some evidence that carefully designed child-care programs—especially those that involve and empower parents—can help improve child well-being among our nation's poorest families.■

Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, October 1, 1991

What families must do for children

By Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

Almost everybody who watches TV or reads newspapers has learned of the recently completed work of the National Commission on Children, the 34-member group created several years ago by the Democratic Congress and the Republican White House to investigate the condition of children in America and to make recommendations for the future. But the reports about the commission's work, while unusually extensive, were also quite predictable.

The media focused almost exclusively on legislation and the politics of legislation. Will Congress follow the commission's recommendations to increase spending on children? Will Republicans continue to resist the proposal, endorsed by a majority of commissioners, to guarantee health care for all children? Are the Democrats stealing the family issue from Republicans? Will Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV, the commission's chairman, use the report to seek the Democratic presidential nomination next year?

Unfortunately, these stories ignored or dismissed what is historically and philosophically most important about the commission: its new consensus on cultural values. This consensus not only represents a breakthrough for children's commissions, but initiates a new period of public thinking about children and their families.

Dozens of commissions on children and families have come and gone in the past 20 years, all prompted by a sense of alarm over the worsening condition of American children. Though these commissions have differed somewhat in size and scope, they have shared a common feature. On the one hand, they have called upon the nation to express its moral commitment by expanding public services for children. On the other hand, they have been conspicuously unwilling to appeal to individuals to express their moral commitment through private behavior. In fact, over the past two decades such commissions have typically refused to consider, much less agree upon, the forms of private family behavior that ought to be valued and pursued as cultural norms.

The National Commission on Children breaks with this tradition. Its major public policy proposal does not call for new or expanded services to children. The $1,000-per-child tax-credit proposal both affirms parental responsibility and widens parental choice. By putting money into the hands of families themselves, the tax-credit empowers parents, not providers and bureaucrats.

The commission's 519-page final report is filled with the language of moral values. It calls upon Americans—and particularly parents—to foster a "culture of character" for children. It exhorts parents to spend more time with their children and to become better "guardians of their children's moral development." It worries about the influence of rock music and sex and violence on television. It urges parents to take to the phones, the schools and the malls to protect their children against corrupting values, messages and images.

This is not the official language of insider politics and legislative analysis. It is the everyday language of the kitchen table. This type of discourse is unfamiliar to many sophisticated observers, who do not care much about ideas that have no obvious "policy implications." It clearly irritated the editors of The New York Times, who opined that the commission's final report, despite containing some interesting legislative recommendations, "swims in platitudes." Exactly.

Perhaps its most important platitude comes in a chapter called "Taking a Stand," in which the commissioners make a moral pronouncement that no prior commission has been willing to make: "Children do best when they have the personal involvement and material support of a father and mother and when both parents fulfill their responsibility to be loving providers. There can be little doubt about having both parents living and working together in a stable marriage can shield children from a variety of risks. Rising rates of divorce, out-of-wedlock childbearing and absent parents are not just manifestations of alternative lifestyles, they are patterns of adult behavior that increase children's risk of negative consequences."

Fourteen years ago, another prestigious children's commission, the Carnegie Council on Children, offered quite a different view of the effects of single parenthood. In a report that did not swim in platitudes about the state of the culture and moral values, these commissioners found that "the financial effects of divorce on children, though still very bad, are by no means disastrous . . . . The greater availability of jobs for women means that more middle-class children today survive their parents' divorce without a catastrophic plunge into poverty."

For the liberals who served on the National Commission on Children, the unambiguous affirmation of the advantages of the married, two-parent family represents a major turning point. During recent decades, liberals have, in effect, viewed children as a stand-alone constituency. They have sought to serve this constituency primarily through new and expanded public programs. They failed, in short, to view children as this commission did: as family members whose well-being is largely dependent upon the actions of their parents. Moreover, as unwed parenthood and divorce have increased, liberal elites have frequently endorsed the notion that the new family forms are just as good as the nuclear family, and that children raised by one parent do just as well as those raised by two. To suggest otherwise, went the logic, would be to stigmatize single parents and blame the victim.

These views, however, are radically at odds with the views of most ordinary Americans. In fact, most Americans do believe, as this commission believes, that some family forms are better for children than others. In focus-group discussions I have conducted with parents, for example, the best informed and most articulate critics of single parenthood are single parents themselves, particularly single mothers. This gap between elite and popular views of the family contributes to the current plight of liberals: Many Americans consider them to be morally weak.

However, as part of this new cultural consensus on the family, liberals are able to move much closer to the thinking of the American public. Consequently, the commission report deserves to be regarded as more than a political event, more than the conventional pastry tray of policy offerings. It is an important intellectual event that marks a major turn after decades of partisan wrangling over the relationship between cultural values and child well-being.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead is a research associate at the Institute for American Values. She is a former policy adviser to Parent Action and chair of the Human Rights Commission in Appleton, Wis. This article is reprinted from the fall issue of "The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities," published by George Washington University.

THE CLARION-LEDGER ■ JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1991

Disappearing dad dilemma puts family in crisis

■ The Institute for American Values founder looks at the issue Sunday.

By Charlotte Graham
Clarion-Ledger Religion Writer

David G. Blankenhorn, founder and president of New York's Institute for American Values, says the biggest crisis faced by families today is the vanishing father.

Blankenhorn, a native of Jackson, will address the topic "The Vanishing Father," Sunday at 2 p.m. at Fondren Presbyterian Church in Jackson.

"One out of every four children in the nation is growing up without a father in the home," said Blankenhorn. "This (is) more than twice as many as in 1960.

"This is a problem for the 15 million children who need fathers to be a role model," he said. "In 1960 only about 11 percent of the children were 'fatherless,' today that figure is about 23 percent."

Blankenhorn

Blankenhorn, 36, said only one in five children sleeps in a father's home in a typical month, while only one in six sees a father an average of once or more per week.

"The role of the father is often overlooked," he said. "What are the consequences for children when more and more children don't see their fathers? It is very important not to forget about the father's role."

A firm believer in a strong family structure and values, Blankenhorn founded the Institute for American Values in 1987 after discovering that "there wasn't an organization in existence to bring the best scholars together to understand family well-being in a non-partisan manner."

The institute is devoted to research, publication and public education on issues of family policy and well-being. "The family is facing a crisis," he said. "Over the past 30 years, I think our culture has been tilting more toward individualism and away from family obligations.

"The clearest losers have been the children," he added. "Children need both parents."

The son of David and Diane Blankenhorn of Madison, Blankenhorn said, "My dad is a good example of a father. He was always there for me and set a good example for me to follow.

"Sometimes what you do in life and what you have as a philosophy is based on your own personal experience," he said. "My father was a good role model for me."

Chief editor of a book called *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, Blankenhorn said today's fathers seem to take the attitude that " 'My main obligation is to myself, not to my community and family.' Therefore, the family is less able to carry out its basic function of raising the next generation.

"The family is the most serious long-term domestic challenge in the nation today," he added. "It is getting harder in the United States to be a child and much of this is the result of the weakening of the family as a social institution.

"This is a societal issue that concerns everyone in society," Blankenhorn said. "I feel that churches can and ought to play an important role to help strengthen family life in our society."

The public is invited to hear Blankenhorn at Fondren.

Institute For American Values
1841 Broadway Suite 211
New York, N. Y. 10023

HARVARD MAGAZINE
September-October 1991 Volume 94, Number 1

Family Man: David Blankenhorn '77, president of the New York City-based Institute for American Values and editor of *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, makes his living by working to preserve and restore the family. According to Blankenhorn, Americans have, regrettably, abandoned the idyllic Ozzie-and-Harriet-style families of yesteryear, with careers and adult-centered growth now taking precedence over the upbringing of children. In response to this neglect, he asserts, "the family as a moral sphere has shrunk" and today's youth have turned to their peers and to popular culture for their moral education.


© 1991 RAINA SACKS

Blankenhorn's interest in the family has three sources. First, while doing community organizing after graduate school, he realized that family life—not questions of economics and public policy—was the primary focus of the underprivileged families he was assisting. Secondly, the complete lack of attention he felt liberals displayed toward family problems in the past decade troubled him. To attract liberal concern, he founded the Institute for American Values, a non-profit think-tank for scholars of the family, subsidized for the most part by donations. (The organization has since become depoliticized.) Lastly, becoming a husband and father made the issues more personally relevant: in his words, "Theory is autobiography."

"How people act in families as adults can be predicted by the families they grew up in," Blankenhorn points out. "Once negative trends spread . . . [we have a] snowball effect." His aim is to prevent the cycle from continuing by shifting family attention (and public philosophy) to the well-being of the child.

"The current generation of young people is the first to grow up after the family revolution, he says. "Divorce, like marriage, is almost a ritual. When separation is so prevalent, it's impossible to know what to expect [from the next generation]." In support of the family fortification, Blankenhorn says, "The only way you learn to love people in general is by learning to love a few specific people." If children can be taught moral values in the home, the trends of the last 25 years may be reversed, and the next generation better adjusted. "What we must have," Blankenhorn says, "is faith: a nonrational, non-self-interested commitment." —*A. M.-S.*

Born: to **Robbin Feibus Steif,** M.B.A. '83, and Paul Steif, Ph.D. '82, a daughter, Talia Suri Steif, on May 24. "While modest in size (7 lbs. 4 oz.), she exhibits great character and elegance."

Nabie Swaray is the founder and president of the African Connection, a nonprofit organization which seeks to further develop the cultural connections between African nations and the world through the arts, media, and sports. "I am recruiting some capable Harvard students and others from colleges around the country. We hope to make this company an international, multiracial, and multicultural one, that is, to open offices in the capital cities of the former empires that have had direct influence in Africa. . . . Our immediate goal is to produce my published play, *Worl' Do For Fraid*, and then take it on a world tour. The next plan is . . . to film the play in Sierra Leone in summer 1992. . . .

"My new play, *A Table for Two*, set at the Tasty in Harvard Square, will have a stage reading next year in Cambridge. The play is about my early days in Boston and Cambridge, semi-autobiographical, before I was admitted to Harvard."

1980

Born: to Cheryl and **Eric B. Rayner Fried,** a son, Jade Patrick Rayner Fried, at home in Sebastopol, Cal., on April 22, 8 lbs. 2 oz. "He had lots of black hair, dark blue eyes, great lungs, and surprisingly strong muscles for throwing back his head, wriggling, and squirming. Helping at the birth were his dad, Eric; Aunt Lisa; housemate Darlene; midwives Suzette and Carolyn; and of course his mom, Cheryl. The whole family is fine, adjusting to each other, and very happy."

Born: to Miriam and **Donald Godfrey**, a daughter, Abigail Frances, on June 29, 1990, in Portland, Me.

June Kinoshita, a freelance journalist in New York, has been named a 1991-92 Knight Science Journalism Fellow; she will spend the year studying at M.I.T.

1981

Born: to **Jonathan Barzilay** and Janet Lunine Barzilay, a daughter, Julie Rebecca Barzilay, on March 13.

Married: **Harold Schloss** and Leonora Grosswasser on August 5, 1990, in Los Angeles. Among the guests were the parents of the groom, Frances B. Schloss '57 and Dr. Stephen Schloss, A.M. '74, and the groom's sister, Judy Schloss '89. Other guests included **Chris Downey;** Julie Sincoff '84; Michi Namioka Garrison '83; Daron Tooch, J.D. '88; Jean Cooper, J.D. '88; and Solomon Golomb, Ph.D. '57. Lenny is a 1984 graduate of St. Louis University and a 1987 graduate of Columbia University Law School. The couple recently purchased a house in the Pico-Robertson area of Los Angeles. They are expecting their first child in December.

Jessica and **John R. Sylla** have moved to the south of London. He is director of marketing, Europe, for Network Equipment Technologies Inc. and is "pleased to have found a suitable off-

Telephone 011-44-306-
3-612648 (office).

32

mpany, cofounded by
n Rauch '84 [see "To
" *Harvard Magazine*,
is celebrating its fifth
ı show: a national tour
's Tale involving peo-
ınities with which the
tour will take 42 peo-
in every past residen-
ıst in September with
5), New York City (9-
4). For information,

.D. '86 Cornell, and
rnell '87, on Decem-
party included David
nd Peter Wilcox '81.
ɛe; George Brown;
ɔod; Paul Nielsen;
ɔnzetti, M.B.A. '86;
Sughrue; Ken Dow
ɨ. Kim is the grand-
ıon, Dillon professor
ritus at Harvard. She
C., and pursuing dual
ɨ Hopkins's Paul H.
International Studies
Steve is currently liv-
ıng ın New York, where he is medical director of the Partial Hospitalization Program at Fair Oakes Hospital in Summit, N.J.

William O'Neill writes, "I may be the only member of the class to have one stepson who has just turned 21 and another who was just graduated from high school. After two-plus years as publications manager for the New Alchemy Institute, an environmental research and education group on Cape Cod, I'm now working as a freelance writer. Ruthanne and I pass our time hiking, canoeing, and gardening. I'd love to hear from Grays 36 and Indy folks." Address: P.O. Box 222, W. Barnstable, Mass. 02668.

Joseph R. Profaci lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Tamara L. Pearsall, and daughter, Caterina, born August 7, 1990. He is an associate with Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, practicing intellectual property law and litigation. He and Matthew B. Hammons '81 recently tried a pro bono civil rights case together in Louisville, Ky.

Veneida E. White was a runner-up for the Gold-Headed Cane Award of the U.C. San Francisco School of Medicine, given the senior judged by faculty and classmates to best exemplify the qualities of a true physician. White plans to work for a year on AIDS education and prevention in the African-American community.

1983

William A. Holley III has joined the law department of Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company in Hartford, Conn., as counsel, specializing in commercial real estate investments.

Born: to **Alison Leonard** and Eric Philadelphe, a son, Cedric, on May 5, in Vannes, France.

Andrew R. Lockman has graduated from the University of Virginia Medical School, winning the Community Service Award from his classmates and the Amparo Villar-Pilasi Memorial Award in Pharmacology. He is now doing a three-year residency in family practice at U.Va.

Born: to Nathalie and **Campbell Rogers,** M.D. '88, a girl, Camille Kinsey, on April 27.

1984

Born: to **Laura G. Beck** and Dirk Ruiz, Pomona '81, Ph.D. '87 Stanford, a son, Saul

THE CLARION LEDGER
Jackson, MS.
Sunday, October 20, 1991

Weight of today's vanishing father tipping scales toward family's slide

By David G. Blankenhorn III
Special to The Clarion-Ledger

What is the state of fatherhood in America?

Much of our national debate about family decline tacitly assumes the dilemma centers on women's roles, choices and responsibilities. But this assumption overlooks the single most troubling family trend of our era: Male flight from family life.

We hear much discussion in the media today about "new fathers" — men who devote themselves to becoming nurturing, hands-on fathers, often making career and other sacrifices in order to spend more time caring for their children. But these fathers do not represent the main new trend in fathering.

To understand today's major trend, picture a father who is absent from the home altogether: Divorced or never married, having little or no steady contact with his children. The dramatic proliferation of this type of father far outweighs any increase in the number of nurturing new fathers. As a group, children today spend far less time with fathers than children of previous generations.

Consider the numbers. Approximately one of every four children in the nation is growing up without a father in the home, more than twice as many as in 1960.

Recent studies document just how fatherless these 15 million children are. Frank Furstenberg of the University of Pennsylvania finds that more than half the children have never visited their father's home. More than 40 percent do not see their father at all in a typical year. Only one in five sleeps in a father's home in a typical month, while only one in six sees a father an average of once or more per week.

In short, more and more of our nation's children simply do not know what it means to have a father.

In the social sciences, absolute proof is virtually impossible. But if current scholarship proves anything, it is that children who live with their fathers tend to do much better — economically, educationally, psychologically, every way we can measure — than children who do not. The growth of fatherlessness, then, constitutes a clear and present danger, not only to the individuals involved but also to our society's long-term health and success.

Where did this problem come from? Sometimes popular language is a key to cultural understanding. Consider, for example, a popular slogan that preceded "new father." The phrase was "good family man." This compliment was once widely heard in our culture, bestowed as a badge of honor to those deserving it. Rough translation: He puts his family first.

Ponder three words. "Good": moral values. "Family": purposes larger than self. "Man": a masculine norm.

Yet today, especially within elite culture, who hears the phrase? It sounds antiquated, almost embarrassing.

Much of the reason, of course, is the modern gender role revolution. The "good family man" carries a lingering connotation of breadwinner and head of the family.

Perhaps our modern version of the good family man is simply the new father. But I doubt it. The "new father" ideal aims at greater androgyny. It suggests that good men are those who eschew many historically masculine traits (protecting and providing) and cultivate historically feminine traits (emotional sensitivity and the nurturance of young children).

As a corrective to an older norm, this ideal has merit. But as a new cultural norm of masculinity, I suspect that most men, and perhaps most women, find it lacking.

What is to be done? Perhaps it is possible to accept the main premise of the women's movement — shared authority between spouses rather than male domination — while also renewing our cultural celebration of men's special contributions to family and childrearing.

Surely, now that the struggle over marital authority has largely been won, at least in principle, by the idea of equality, we can affirm that gender differences are not inherently negative. For if we discard any concept of the good family man for our era, we admit that fatherhood is not a cultural ideal worth defending. If so, we should not be surprised by the continuing decline of fatherhood in society.

■

David G. Blankenhorn III is president of the Institute for American Values, a New York City-based organization concerned with family issues. He is a Jackson native and recently lectured on this subject at Fondren Presbyterian Church.