

social agencies retained their children, as Harry's father gave rights to the agency, voluntary children who might be placed for a period, the term "foster parent" for one who was living at earlier times, the custodial and property rights, subject to the parent's property rights. Even without doubt, conflict existed between the courts. Courts often decided that it was better to take children out of their parents, whom they might

be time-limited, with the family fabric had made it by the 1970s Albert Solnit, Center, was lamenting that care and support (i.e., foster) easily become an irreparable family. More and more actively "parentless" families even though both mother and father faced with chaos became indicating their placement in

of orphanages in favor of used in the 1930s—some were temporarily until they stayed in a home setting would children experienced both needed to be at first a temporary and they had no real home were still being served in care, although orphanage statements by the child protection, this goal

Rosie the Riveter and Her Sisters

Twice we have done something about day care, but never in terms of what the children need. In the depression years centers were maintained with Federal assistance in order to provide employment for adults. In the war years they were maintained in order to get women on the job. It is time now that the whole problem be considered in terms of the welfare of children.

—KATHARINE LENROOT, CHIEF, U.S. CHILDREN'S BUREAU, 1946

IN WHAT IS TODAY a nearly forgotten social experiment, the federal government subsidized nationwide child care for working mothers of young children during World War II. It was the first time in the nation's history that day care for children who were not poor was supported by public funds. The need for womanpower coupled with horror stories of neglected and abused children prodded Washington to recognize that local governments could not possibly handle the stampede of families to war production areas. One and a half million women with children under ten years of age surged into the workforce, enticed by appeals to patriotism and the lure of good wages. Children left alone or with caretakers too old or too young to do a good job were injured or killed in accidents. In the San Fer-

nando Valley of California, a social worker counted forty-five left locked in cars all night in factory parking lots. The mothers positioned the cars under the windows of the rooms in which they worked so they could glance out and check on their youngsters from time to time: In San Diego, children whose families had migrated to get jobs were chained to trailers, their temporary homes. Other children were locked into, or out of, houses and apartments. Many wore the keys to their houses around their necks, giving rise to the term "latchkey children." Women struggled to devise makeshift arrangements, hoping their children would be unharmed. In Connecticut, mothers left younger children outside school buildings and told them to wait there "until Johnny gets out of school." They formed pint-sized gangs of mischievous marauders. In Muncie, Indiana, the manager of a movie theater reported that women working on the night shift parked their children in the theater and "I've had as many as 50 to 60 children left here and sometimes when I leave the closed theater they are still waiting out on the streets for their family." An eight-year-old boy, in the time-honored role of baby-sitter for a younger sibling, picked up his three-year-old sister at nursery school, fed her lunch that he had prepared, then left her alone until he came back home in the afternoon. There were estimates that as many as 2 million youngsters needed some kind of care other than their mothers', with no organized plan to care for many of them. Abuse and neglect were not universal, but they dramatized the problem. The war was a national emergency, these stories cried out; child care was a national responsibility.

Eight months after Pearl Harbor, federal funds were made available to maintain all-day care, before and after school, and vacation care for the children of women working in the war effort. The children ranged in age from two to sixteen. The Lanham Act Centers, as they were called, received 50 percent of their support from the federal government, with states, localities, and parents matching that amount. (Fritz Lanham, the representative from Texas whose bill funded sewers, hospitals, and other necessary services in overcrowded areas, protested that this use distorted his purpose, but he was ignored.) Administration of the centers stayed incongruously within the Federal Works Agency, established originally to deal with structures, not children. During the two and a half years of their existence, the centers received 52 million dollars of federal aid to help run 3,102 centers nationwide. They reflected the social realities of

the country. In Southern races, 259 segregate

In the Beginning

The Lanham Act came from the ashes of the Progress Administration. Nurseries were near teachers, nurses, and custodians, the first component of the federal government for the poor only, serving low incomes or were on the verge of being discontinued to become Lanham Act centers in vitally important

The WPA centers had many as forty thousand children in each center. There were a dozen teachers and an assistant and a janitor; those whose mothers were not working.

Since their primary purpose was to care for the center staffs had been trained with unemployed teachers to work in day care. The centers were a preparation to prepare them for the next years of age. "Maybe the best quality of training was out of the experience of the supervisor emerita at the University of Chicago. They were an opportunity to do what they could be." The centers took children from all parts of the country. At the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, ten thousand children

The schools were not the only places. Parents were involved in the work. Teachers and sometimes parents were involved in the center-education component.

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the country. In Southern states whose laws required separation of the races, 259 segregated centers served 12,335 Negro children in 1943.

In the Beginning

The Lanham Act wartime child-care centers rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the WPA day nurseries. Authorized by the Works Progress Administration in 1933, the depth of the Depression, these nurseries were meant to give jobs to out-of-work teachers, nutritionists, nurses, and custodians, among others. The program was a landmark, the first comprehensive support and funding of child care by the federal government, but it was in the old tradition of "for the poor only," serving young children whose families had inadequate incomes or were on welfare. When those make-work day-care centers were discontinued on March 1, 1943, most of them had qualified to become Lanham Act Centers for the children of mothers working in vitally important war-related industries.

The WPA centers in the thirties and early forties had served as many as forty thousand poor preschoolers in a given month in fifteen hundred centers spread across the country. No more than thirty children were in each class, with two teachers or one head teacher and an assistant and often an aide as well. Poor children paid nothing; those whose mothers were working paid a nominal fee.

Since their primary purpose was creating jobs, 90 percent of the center staffs had to be from the relief rolls, which were clogged with unemployed teachers who became the first trained specialists to work in day care. They received an additional three months' instruction to prepare them to deal with children from two and a half to five years of age. "Maybe I'm biased by having lived so long, but the quality of training was outstanding in these centers," Millie Almy, professor emerita at the University of California at Berkeley, says. "They were an opportunity to demonstrate what nursery schools were and what they could be." (The only other demonstration that touched children from all parts of the country had existed sixty years earlier at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, where a model day nursery handled ten thousand children parked there by sightseeing parents.)

The schools were designed to help parents as well as children. Parents were involved in parent-education classes as students and as

an education component of the program has recently been criti-

cized by what Dr. Almy calls "reconstructionist historians." "They say it was Big Brother trying to influence parents to adopt middle-class standards," she says, "but I don't think the parents felt that way. All of us were trying to bring those parents into the main stream. I don't think it was intended as a put down, but the revisionists make the point that when you're trying to pull somebody up what you're saying is where you came from was no good." The same concern was expressed about settlement house programs in the 1890s aimed at immigrants and their children. It reflects a vexing American dilemma that runs like a thread through this country's history: How can children of varying backgrounds be helped to succeed in the outside world without destroying or denigrating their traditional customs and attitudes? Are we to be a melting pot or a kind of stew of still-recognizable chunks? Nineteenth-century immigrants were clear that their hope for their children was that they would become "American," and many of them jettisoned their language and customs and embraced the child-care advice given by the experts.

By the 1930s, when immigration had waned and immigrant children were no longer a focus of concern, day care and child-rearing advice were offered to the poor in an effort to lift them out of poverty and provide their children with the opportunity to move into the mainstream. How much it helped and how much it hurt is debatable, but the WPA centers provided the first long-term, large-scale demonstration of how group child care coupled with parent education could improve the lives of children and smoothed the way for what came later.

Threatened with extinction as unemployment decreased and mobilization for war began, the nurseries were supported by groups seeing them primarily as serving the needs of children rather than unemployed teachers. The National Council of Negro Women pointed out that as black women left their homes or jobs as domestics to work in war-related industry and agriculture, their need for child care increased, and the WPA supplied 90 percent of the nurseries for the children of working Negro mothers. At the last minute funds were allotted by President Roosevelt to tide the WPA facilities over, until some other system could be established. In 1943 the earlier centers officially ended. For a short time, the old and new systems coexisted. When WPA funds ended, most of those centers qualified to continue operating under the Lanham Act umbrella.

As noted earlier, the new system differed from the WPA pro-

gram in one essential not just for those who Centers kept the education schools. Others were rather than preparatory involvement decreased employed and had little

Like all large-scale Centers varied in quality. Some had only piles of books. Others had the blocks, but even this was no guarantee. The Lanham Act Center a supervisory the shelves, untouched and blocks," she reported the people, not the success of the program.

Consider the Women

Great uneasiness continued the nineteenth century outside the home, but being time until marriage. With the notable exception of work outside the home, their job was to care for child care and work. New York University argued logical research reflected motherhood." A man had mother's employment failure. Women's job that a man supported not. Neither the suffrage changed this attitude was still about the same percent. It took the But even during the supported the position

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gram in one essential respect: These centers were for all children, not just for those whose parents were on welfare. Some Lanham Act Centers kept the educational component of the earlier WPA nursery schools. Others were criticized as providing just custodial care, rather than preparation for kindergarten and grade school. Parental involvement decreased, since these mothers were, by definition, employed and had little free time.

Like all large-scale programs, both the WPA and Lanham Act Centers varied in quality and in the content of their daily routine. Some had only piles of broken toys for the children to play with; others had the blocks, paints, and clay designed to foster learning. But even this was no guarantee that they would be used. At one Lanham Act Center a supervisor opened a closet and found blocks piled on the shelves, untouched. "They just didn't know what to do with kids and blocks," she reported. As in most child-care arrangements, it was the people, not the setting or the theory, that determined the quality of the program.

Consider the Women

Great uneasiness complicated the obvious need for child care. Since the nineteenth century, Americans have approved women working outside the home, but they were mostly single, usually young, marking time until marriage, or older women whose children were grown. With the notable exception of black women, most mothers did not work outside the home. The experts and common sense agreed that their job was to care for their children. In her survey of research on child care and working mothers, Dr. Louise B. Silverstein of New York University argues that "both governmental policy and psychological research reflect the popular culture's idealized myth of motherhood." A man had a duty to support his wife and children, and a mother's employment was an indication of abject poverty or family failure. Women's jobs and women's wages reflected the expectation that a man supported a family with what he earned, but a woman did not. Neither the suffrage movement nor agitation for women's rights changed this attitude, and in 1940, the percentage of women working was still about the same as it had been in 1920—a little more than 20 percent. It took the needs of a wartime economy to fuel a revolution. But even during the war, although the National War Labor Board supported the position that women should be paid the same money

for the same job, in practice they earned only 65 percent of men's wages in factories.

Before almost 2 million mothers entered the labor market, those bent under the double burden of work and child care had been a small minority, hidden in poverty statistics. With mothers flooding into factories, a spotlight was focused for the first time on the exhausted lives of ordinary women. *The New York Times* reported in 1944, "Of late many voices have been raised in defense of the wage-earning mother, carrying a double load of job and home-making." Her backbreaking schedule also became the object of compassionate concern in the popular women's magazines.

Children, too, carried a double load, often forced to be their own parents while their mother and father worked or went into battle. A contemporary observer of the Alabama war industry boom towns warned, "It is an evil situation today and . . . it can and will make a hell of this country, unless we take heroic measures to meet it."

The Lanham Act Centers were as close as the country got to heroic measures. By July 1945, the peak of the war effort, approximately 1.6 million children were in federally funded nursery schools and day-care centers, according to the U.S. Children's Bureau. Others have calculated that a total of about six hundred thousand different children received care through Lanham Act funds during the two and a half years of its existence. The real figure is hard to come by. Depending on when the count was taken, figures could vary widely. Some children could be counted several times, others not at all. The Children's Bureau had a stake in inflating the figures to make the program seem significant; critics had an equal interest in making it seem inadequate. One estimate is that only 10 percent of the children needing care were in the centers. Whatever the specific numbers, more young children were cared for away from their mothers than ever before.

The Slow Start

Ambivalence haunted the experiment. On the one hand were those who saw working mothers as exhausted patriotic heroines on whom the war effort depended; on the other were traditionalists who saw them as a "national disgrace." Women were told their labor was vital; they were also told their place was at home with their children. Paul McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission, tried to clar-

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ify the government's stand in August 1942 when he declared, "The first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their own homes to their children." An educator who supervised Lanham Act Centers in upstate New York remembers that "people yelled about the idea of day care. There was antagonism or hostility with a religious undertone. It wasn't the way God intended it. Mothers should take care of their children. The idea of day care was appalling to a lot of people." The implicit assumption was that young children did best when they were cared for by their mothers, and underlying that assumption was the premise that all mothers were, by definition, the perfect caretakers of their children. The National Catholic Welfare Council supported the centers, albeit reluctantly, "because of unavoidable conditions placing mothers in industry," but other Catholic groups continued to oppose them.

An unexpected champion of working mothers was Chicago's Institute for Psychoanalysis. "Employment," said their statement on women in wartime, "saves the woman from a feeling of helplessness; work makes her feel free and independent. If the children are satisfactorily cared for [the statement did not specify the ages], work is a good solution since it decreases the wife's resentment at being left alone in a drab, everyday life, and it protects her children from the resentment she might feel toward them if she were tied down, kept from her own need to go out in the world. Increased income gives her good justification for leaving her children, and if she is not too tired at the end of the day, she makes compensation to them in what time she has." Quality time, not quantity, was what counted.

With so many conflicting attitudes to be reconciled, the centers got off to a slow start. They were a novel idea, not well publicized at first. Reluctance to use them even when they were known reflected the traditional American view that families took care of their own without outside help, and that public facilities were for the poor or those whose kinship ties had broken down. Sometimes money was allotted but not used because not as many children as expected enrolled, and some of the first centers closed quickly because too few children showed up at their doors.

Grandmothers and other relatives took care of children under fourteen for a third to a half of all working mothers in nine war production areas studied in 1944-45. Very few of them used nursery schools. The highest usage—11 percent—occurred in San Francisco,

an area with a long tradition of early childhood education. Nationwide, a Gallup poll in 1943 found that only 29 percent of the women questioned would take war jobs if their children could be cared for without cost in a day nursery; 46 percent said they preferred relatives and friends. They, like many Americans, associated day care with welfare and cruelty. One war worker said she was criticized for leaving her children in a center because "it sounds like the Spartans binding their children over to the state."

Government infighting reflected the dissension in society, with one agency or another grasping for control of whatever child-care program was established. Social welfare agencies warned against leaving the care of infants to others but recognized that whatever care was set up should be considered in the broad context of services to children. War agencies concentrated on the temporary nature of the need and consistently emphasized that the government was not then, and should never be, in the business of intruding into the lives of families with young children.

Difficulties in finding space in overcrowded war production areas and delays in recruiting trained personnel also impeded the centers. In addition, communities hesitated to apply for funds because, as a California report put it, "Many regarded any encouragement to mothers to leave the home for a job as socially undesirable."

The Lanham Act's creaking start prompted the National Council of Jewish Women to warn that "if a community does not provide proper care for its children, it will shortly be faced with even greater problems of disease, illiteracy, and delinquency. By providing child-care facilities, we are not granting special privileges to mothers who suddenly decide they want to work. We are protecting our investment in post-war America by caring for today's children."

Opposition to the centers faded as they became better established and better known. Within a few months, they demonstrated that preschool children could be happy in group care, and mothers who had been struggling with alternative arrangements enrolled their youngsters. Soon, many of the centers had waiting lists. Some that had closed after failing to attract patrons reopened. Studies of 500 California children in two nursery schools between 1943 and 1946 confirmed this success. When they were asked how they felt about their children's experiences, the 173 mothers questioned gave generally favorable opinions in 81 percent of the cases. The researcher concluded: "The child care program for under-fives has re-

duced tensions, lesser home situations, and family living." In Detroit parents of children in and 94 percent noticed Fears that the Lanham family life subsided as

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The Daily Routine

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duced tensions, lessened friction in the home and insecurity in non-home situations, and so benefitted the children and strengthened family living." In Detroit a 1945 survey showed that 84 percent of the parents of children in the centers thought they benefited physically, and 94 percent noticed they got along better with other children. Fears that the Lanham Act Centers would hurt children and destroy family life subsided as the realities of the experience became evident.

Mothers endorsed the professional findings. Wilma Thatcher, a welder whose husband was serving overseas, called the centers "the best thing that could happen for working mothers." In Seattle, Edith Brown, a chauffeur at the Navy Yard, said the View Ridge Play Center her children attended was "a marvelous place," and added that "it would be impossible for me to teach them all the things they're learning." Frankie Cooper, a crane operator in a foundry, told an interviewer years later that at first she felt guilty about leaving her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. But she soon came to see "that sometimes it's good for the child. . . . So when I look back on it now, I think that it was a plus for me, to have her learn about different people and be with them, because she was an only child." Other mothers noticed that their children learned songs, spoke more clearly, and were more cooperative.

Asked how they themselves benefited from having their children in nursery school, the mothers in the California survey most often cited increased patience with their children. They said they also learned to treat their youngsters as individuals and to encourage the sometimes maddening curiosity of their preschoolers. In short, they felt they became better mothers.

The Daily Routine

Children spent twelve hours a day, six days a week at the centers. Mothers or fathers dropped youngsters aged two to five off at about 6:00 or 6:30 A.M. on their way to work and picked them up at 6:00 or 7:00 P.M. after work. The centers were open six days a week, over the summer, and during holidays except for Christmas, and they also adapted their hours to local needs. When it was rush season at the canneries, they stayed open later. Some were regularly open around the clock to accommodate workers at airfields, factories, sugar refineries, and oil depots that had three shifts. Others were open on farming schedules for the children of migrant workers.

In the best of them the children's routine was that of any good nursery school and included indoor and outdoor play, a chance to use paints and clay and musical instruments, and regular naps. With one teacher for every ten children, they met standard recommendations. Since one of the aims of the program was to improve nutrition, the children were fed hot lunches and, if necessary, dinners, and dosed every day with cod-liver oil and orange juice, the precursors of vitamin tablets. The food was included in the fees parents paid.

Centers around the country at first charged fixed amounts, which varied with the locality. In Detroit in 1943 this was six dollars a week per child. In Jacksonville, Florida, it was two dollars a day for whites, one dollar and twenty-five cents a day for Negroes. But with clerical workers earning only twenty-eight dollars a week and workers in war plants forty-seven dollars, it soon became clear that many families could not afford to pay this much. Some communities were hard-pressed to provide the 50 percent matching funds required to get federal money, and when fees were recalculated according to a sliding scale, the situation got worse, not better. Reducing parents' contributions put a greater burden on localities. Some of them decided they could not afford the centers at all. Eventually, in an attempt to keep fees as low as possible and make child care more affordable, the federal government set a uniform fee in 1943 of fifty cents a day; later it was raised to seventy-five cents a day.

By 1944 the program's administrators had answered some criticisms that their services were too narrowly focused by adding information centers for parents, health care (including examination by a physician) for children, and transportation in a few places where distances were great.

A study of five hundred children in two Lanham Act California nursery schools provides a profile of the population using these centers. In 1945, at the height of the war effort, almost half the fathers were in the armed services. About a third were in industry—the draft usually exempted fathers who were in war work. Some of the women were war widows. Most of the children were two years old, reinforcing the observation of others that the greatest need was for the youngest children. About half the children showed no noticeable emotional effects because of the war. But among those who did react, there was a sharp drop in worry and fear about the father when the war had been over for almost a year and many of the servicemen were home.

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In some families, the servicemen did not return. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, a survey as the war was ending showed that between 75 and 85 percent of the children receiving care were from homes in which the mother worked because the father had been killed or disabled in the fighting. In Cleveland, Ohio, over 66 percent of women using the centers were the sole wage earners in their families.

Necessity Versus the Experts

Group care for nursery-school-age children might be acceptable, but the experts drew the line at such care for the very young, despite the compelling necessity for women with infants to work—particularly after fathers were eligible to be drafted after October 1943. Millie Almy, who supervised WPA and Lanham Act Centers in California, recalls that “psychoanalysis said, ‘No, No,’ so public support for infant care was minimal.” Lanham Act funds could be used for group care of those under two, but not for care in another home, and local officials were reluctant to place infants in groups. Science, they said, bore them out. Anna Freud summarized the latest thinking with “There is no justification to extend what we recognize as the benefits of the nursery school for the older child to the care of infants, especially not for those between birth and year 2.”

But by 1944, Florence Kerr, director of war public services of the Federal Works Agency, was saying, “Although the employment of women with children under 2 years of age has been frowned upon, we know that, realistically, many women with young children have been forced to take war jobs. If a community needs group care for children under 2 years to answer a pressing war need, we shall be glad to provide funds for it.” The financial reality was that servicemen’s wives received thirty to forty cents a day as an allowance for the support of each child—not even enough to feed them. Women had to work.

As a result some infants were placed in nurseries. The Child Welfare League, in 1945, called this a blunder, pointing out that infants under two needed home care and should not be put in groups. The Children’s Bureau, too, warned that such communal arrangements risked the dangers of high infant mortality faced by orphanages and other institutions.

In what Karen Anderson, author of *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations and the Status of Women During World War II*, called

"a classic example of predetermined conclusions," an FWA (Federal Works Administration) study found that children under two years of age in an experimental infant-care center in San Diego showed (as predicted) "troubling signs of developmental difficulty" although the infants had been in the center for only a short time and could hardly have been seriously affected. The study abruptly ended any attempt in California to fund group care and validated what the Child Welfare League of America and the Children's Bureau had been saying all along: Mothers with young children should stay home or the children would suffer dreadful damage. If mothers did not stay home, the next best thing would be to develop foster homes to provide day care.

A few private agencies did establish what they called "foster family day care"—what we now call family day care. Infants were placed in homes where they could be cared for during the day, then returned to their mothers at night. Foster day care could also be used to handle the temporary emergency of a sick child, or a child who did not do well in group care. Then, too, there was the situation of a large family that might otherwise have to juggle multiple child-care arrangements, and the problem of Texas-sized distances that made getting to a day nursery unreasonable. Wartime working conditions, too, which put women on rotating shifts at different times of the day, made some sort of flexible, individualized day care imperative, as some centers even refused to take children whose mothers worked irregular hours.

Finding foster families was never easy, and wartime conditions made the situation even more difficult, since women who might take in children were working in war factories themselves. In June 1943, only nine areas of the country had programs of this type. The care was expensive and almost entirely in the hands of private agencies or private entrepreneurs.

One successful agency was the Chicago Orphan Asylum, whose program began in 1943 and reflects the general experience of mothers working in war industries. Most of the children were under two, and almost half the women had husbands who were in the armed forces. The agency soon discovered that this kind of day care filled many needs that had little to do with the war. Mothers were working (at war jobs) to help pay the bills, or they were the sole support of their children. Some needed temporary care in a crisis. Some "confessed openly that they preferred outside to domestic chores," a so-

cial worker reported. Since rigid rules, the agency was needs. Despite this acceptance, wartime or not, the three homes ended with the war.

Forgotten Forerunners

What seemed like a shock to young children from their tradition. Even children under two years of age in day care more than a century before the first infant schools that flourished in Colonial New England. The ABC of small children their ABC

No one expressed concern about this early separation until the 19th century. Forerunners were enshrined as vital to the lives of their young children. Day care in the lives of their young children became a full-time job. Frances Berry pointed out

Like many other innovations introduced in Great Britain. In 1780, a partner in several cotton mills, Robert Owen, took in children, eighteen months in the mill in New Lanark seems both cruel and impractical. For by one male teacher at a time was to keep the children occupied enough to go to work in the mill. In 1827, John Ruskin, his short-lived companion, founded an American school based on Owen's ideas. These are the direct ancestors of modern day care. Signed to make it possible, it evolved from simple caretaking to the very young children. Owen's schools were a seventeenth-century idea. Foundingly influenced Moravia

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 rigid rules, the agency was able to accommodate this wide variety of
 needs. Despite this acceptance of the realities of women's lives,
 wartime or not, the three-year experiment in day care in foster
 homes ended with the war's end in 1945.

Forgotten Forerunners

What seemed like a shocking departure in the 1940s—taking very
 young children from their mothers—was really in a long American
 tradition. Even children under two years of age had been in group
 care more than a century before the Lanham Act Centers. They went
 to infant schools that flourished in the 1820s and 1830s and to dame
 schools in Colonial New England where women taught small groups
 of small children their ABCs or just kept an eye on them.

No one expressed concern about the effect on their psyches of
 this early separation until the mid-nineteenth century, when moth-
 ers were enshrined as vital and irreplaceable, twenty-four hours a
 day, in the lives of their young offspring. It was then that mother-
 hood became a full-time profession rather than a role, as Mary
 Frances Berry pointed out in her book *The Politics of Parenthood*.

Like many other innovations in child care, infant schools origi-
 nated in Great Britain. In 1815 Robert Owen, a utopian reformer and
 a partner in several cotton mills, started a school for one hundred
 children, eighteen months to six years of age, whose mothers worked
 in the mill in New Lanark, Scotland. By today's standards the school
 seems both cruel and impossible, since all these children were cared
 for by one male teacher and a teenage female assistant. Owen's aim
 was to keep the children healthy and happy until they were old
 enough to go to work in the mills themselves. At New Harmony, In-
 diana, his short-lived communal settlement in this country, the first
 American school based on his model was set up in 1825. His schools
 are the direct ancestors of the Lanham Act Centers; they were de-
 signed to make it possible for women to work in factories, and they
 evolved from simple caretaking institutions to those that took advan-
 tage of the very young child's interest in learning. Like all infant edu-
 cation, Owen's schools owed a debt to Comenius, whose
 seventeenth-century idea of teaching all children all things so pro-
 foundly influenced Moravian boarding and day schools.

The infant-school idea took hold and flourished in this coun-

try, first sponsored by churches and other charitable organizations, then absorbed in some places into the public school system. New York had fifty-eight when they were turned over to the public schools in 1853. The New York school on Canal Street served anywhere from fifty to one hundred children from eighteen months to six years of age on any given day, with a staff of two teachers, a principal, and an assistant. Some children came for just the regular school day; others brought their dinners with them and stayed till dark. The schools were seen as a way to counteract some of the deadening effects of poverty and give poor children a "head start" before they entered primary school. New York's Public School Society put it this way: "The infant mind is capable of receiving instruction at the early age of two or three years [and] providing a place in which the younger children of the poor may pass the day comfortably, whilst their parents are engaged in their usual avocations, instead of wandering the streets, exposed to the contamination of vice, is an object worthy the regard of the benevolent."

Infant schools were based on the premise that young children are infinitely malleable rather than fixed at birth in a mold determined by their genetic heritage or programmed to develop according to an inborn timetable. In 1828 Bronson Alcott identified infancy as a time of "great and rapid change" and one of his contemporaries pointed out that "he [the child] can and does learn a great deal more before that age [six] than all he ever learns or can learn in all his after life." Poor children could make up for their disadvantages with early learning that would set them on the path to success in school and in life.

Like other child-care ideas, such as the mid-nineteenth-century kindergarten, these schools were too good to be left to the poor; the standard trickle-up effect soon made them available to all children in privately sponsored facilities. In 1829 the *Ladies' Magazine* commented that the topic of infant schools was becoming more and more popular, and, "We have been told that it is now in contemplation, to open a school for the infants of others beside the poor. If such course be not soon adopted, at the age for entering primary schools those *poor* children will assuredly be the *richest* of scholars. And why should a plan which promises so many advantages, independent of merely relieving the mother from her charge, be confined to the children of the indigent?"

The infant schools, which flourished only for about twenty years starting in the 1820s, owed their quick popularity in part to the

fact that children as young as two or three were in school in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and balk at starting the process over again.

The decline of the infant school was a result of its sudden popularity. The infant school was seen as a way to get the child out of the home to work in factories or on farms. At that time, both work and child labor were common, although the need persisted to return early schooling to credit professional advice. F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovsكي, in a study of Massachusetts, found that the infant school declined just as parents began to argue against the idea of the infant school. It seems likely that in view championed by the S. popular advice-givers, that their own rate. One of the difficult a task it must be, little darling alone, till the bud and prepared the way "the fact that a child *can* learn mean it is a good idea to teach."

The temptation to it are clearly able to learn in a hesitant dance based. In Colonial times, where three-year-olds were required to learn Latin as well as English, children were cautioned about

Intellectual force-feeding. Brigham cautioned in 1850 that early learning is indeed great, and that very early the intellectual faculties of the child are brought forth by years of age, serious and body and the mind. . . . bring forth beautiful, but soon to wither away, with

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Canal Street served any- from eighteen months to f of two teachers, a princi- for just the regular school m and stayed till dark. The some of the deadening ef- head start" before they en- School Society put it this ing instruction at the early ing a place in which the ae day comfortably, whilst vocations, instead of wan- ination of vice, is an object

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hed only for about twenty ick popularity in part to the

fact that children as young as three and four were already in school in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Parents did not balk at starting the process even earlier.

The decline of the infant schools is harder to explain than their sudden popularity. The Industrial Revolution, by taking women out of the home to work in factories, created the need for them. Before that time, both work and child rearing took place in the home. But, although the need persisted, thinking changed, and parents were told to return early schooling to the mother's knee. It is always dangerous to credit professional advice with changes in the real world, but Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovkis, by examining school records in Massachusetts, found that the percentage of very young children in school declined just as popular and expert opinion were turning against the idea of the intellectual force-feeding of very young children. It seems likely that infant schools died partly in response to the view championed by the Swiss educator Pestalozzi, and embraced by popular advice-givers, that children should be allowed to develop at their own rate. One of them acknowledged that "it is obvious how difficult a task it must be, to persuade parents to let their sprightly little darling alone, till the rain and the sunshine have opened the bud and prepared the way for mental culture." But, he continued, "the fact that a child *can* learn to read when it is three or four doesn't mean it is a good idea to teach him."

The temptation to instruct very young children as soon as they are clearly able to learn has been embraced, then backed away from in a hesitant dance based on the steps of one philosophy or another. In Colonial times, when children were seen as miniature adults, three-year-olds were regularly taught to read, and some of them learned Latin as well as English. By the mid-nineteenth century parents were cautioned about turning their children into prodigies.

Intellectual force-feeding was discouraged then because it was feared that early learning could lead to insanity. Dr. Amariah Brigham cautioned in 1832, "I am forced to believe that the danger is indeed great, and that very often in an attempt to call forth and cultivate the intellectual faculties of children before they are six or seven years of age, serious and lasting injury has been done both to the body and the mind. . . . Early mental excitement will serve only to bring forth beautiful, but premature flowers, which are destined soon to wither away, without producing fruit."

As the infant schools faded, day-care centers that were custodial

rather than dangerously intellectual were established for the children of working mothers. In 1838 a day nursery for the children of seamen's wives and widows opened in Boston. In 1854 another was set up at the Nursery and Child's Hospital in New York for children whose mothers had been patients there. Nurses took care of the children when the mothers went back to work. Four years later two women from Troy, New York, who had seen this system went home and established their own version, incorporating a clinic to ensure the health of their young charges. But major impetus for the day-care movement came with the Civil War. As women were needed "to manufacture soldiers' clothing and to clean in hospitals," a day-care nursery was organized in Philadelphia in 1863. By the end of the century, it was estimated that 175 child-care centers, most of them sponsored by settlement houses, were in existence.

Nursery schools descended from the infant schools that had moved from serving only poor children to serving the middle class as well; day care remained the province of the poor, focusing more on custody, cleanliness, and nourishment than on education. A two-tier system had developed by the time the Lanham Act Centers were started, with private nursery schools for the affluent and near-affluent and day care funded by social agencies for poverty-stricken working mothers. Ordinarily, the mothers of children who went to nursery school were at home; the mothers of day-care children were at work. Day care was custodial, nursery school educational. But early nursery schools shared some of the characteristics of later day care; in 1928 a survey showed that 60 percent had school days lasting from 8:30 to 4:30.

Nineteenth-century objections to early childhood education were influential and cast a long shadow. As wartime day-care centers more than a century later moved from the custodial care with which they began to formalized nursery-school training, grave concern was expressed that the experience would harm children. Not only were they to be separated from their mothers, they were to be forced to learn things they might not have learned if they had stayed safely at home. As one observer put it, child care and early childhood education were "unceremoniously united in many communities during the war years." This marriage signaled a social change, giving thousands of children too young for kindergarten group experiences aimed at furthering their physical and intellectual development. "The rumblings against day care went underground during the war," a consul-

tant to the centers recalled feeling that it was a good munity learned about chil-

Schools as Baby-sitters

The Lanham Act Center, the venerable tradition of their older brothers and for early public schools plus parents' contribution young children were pac by local officials that "the years old, to school, to 'g' deprecated. Every teacher *give instruction*, not to a called derisively "trundle tury. Very young children older brothers and sisters, system complained children taken care of, an

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established for the children of seafarers. In 1854 another was set up in New York for children whose mothers took care of the children at work. Four years later two more in this system went home, one by operating a clinic to ensure the impetus for the day-care centers women were needed "to get them in hospitals," a day-care center in 1863. By the end of the century, most of them sponsored by the state.

The infant schools that had been serving the middle class as well as the poor, focusing more on moral than education. A two-tier system of Lanham Act Centers were created for affluent and near-affluent families for poverty-stricken families of children who went to day-care centers. But the characteristics of later day-care centers had school days lasting

early childhood education. Wartime day-care centers provided custodial care with which parents, grave concern was expressed for children. Not only were they to be forced to stay if they had stayed safely at home and early childhood education in communities during the war, change, giving thousands of women experiences aimed at development. "The rumormongers during the war," a consul-

tant to the centers recalled in an interview. "There was an upsurge of feeling that it was a good thing to take up the slack. The whole community learned about child care."

Schools as Baby-sitters

The Lanham Act Centers, many of them based in schools, extended the venerable tradition of using schools as caretakers for toddlers and their older brothers and sisters. Since there were no lower age limits for early public schools (a hybrid often supported by public funds plus parents' contributions, as the Lanham Act Centers were), very young children were packed off to the schoolhouse despite protests by local officials that "the practice of sending children, two or three years old, to school, to 'get them out of the way,' cannot be too much deprecated. Every teacher, it should be remembered, is employed to *give instruction*, not to *act the part of a nurse*." Such children were called derisively "trundle-bed trash" throughout the nineteenth century. Very young children were kept in school all day along with their older brothers and sisters, and an official of the Lynn, Massachusetts, system complained that parents felt they had paid to have their children taken care of, and "are annoyed by their presence at home."

When a participant proposed to the New York State Constitutional Convention in 1867 that the law be changed to prohibit children under seven from attending the public schools, a colleague protested that this was part of a movement that would "transcend the decision of parents as to the capacities and needs of their own offspring." Children forced to stay home from school would linger at the corner grocery stores, wander along rural roads, get lost, and be abused by drunken parents. "When [the proposer] sinks at last upon his pillow, the wishes of a host of poor but honest parents will go forth that imps may play all night at mumblety-peg with tiny pitchforks upon his philanthropic breast."

Eventually, and over the objections of parents that continued for fifty years, compulsory education laws were enacted that also included noneducation rules, setting the age at which children might start school at five or six years, and the age at which they might leave at twelve. Parents continued to object that their individual rights and their right to determine what happened to their children were being usurped by the state. But the regulations held, and by 1918 even Mississippi, the last holdout, had adopted them. In 1880 schools in this

country stayed in session, on average, for 130 days, but many children attended only sporadically—the average was 86 days. The length of the school year varied widely: In predominantly rural Kentucky, only eight weeks a year were required. Schools adapted to the needs of the communities in which they existed, with some even holding night sessions in the elementary grades for children who worked on farms or in factories and couldn't attend during the day. By the 1940s the school year had stretched to 175 days, and children attended for an average of 152 of them, making schools the primary baby-sitters of the nation's children.

In a persistent pattern, responsibility for children has shifted from home and family to society and government. In the nation's early years children were taught and taken care of at home. Gradually they were sent to school, but parents decided at what age and how long they would stay. Then local and state regulations stripped parents of this choice and put children more and more in the care of teachers. This represented, as Kaestle and Vinovkis put it, "a widespread and seemingly irreversible increase in the extent of state intervention in the rearing of children."

The same sort of thing happened later with child care as a separate entity, rather than as part of the school system. Responsibility for young children shifted from home to child-care centers and nursery schools only in the pressure cooker of the war years. It is not that parents were completely cut out of the process of growing up, but, as in so many other areas, society moved in to play a larger part.

Older Children

If neglect was the propelling force behind providing care for young children during the war, delinquency focused attention on the older ones. Society had a responsibility to protect its citizens from acts that would be considered criminal if they were committed by an adult. Lanham Act funds supported not only child-care centers but before- and after-school and vacation care for children from six to sixteen years of age as a way of keeping youngsters busy and happy, and the streets safe to walk on. In New York City alone, in the first six months of 1942, delinquency rose by 14 percent over what it had been a year earlier. More than five hundred "conflict gangs" were said to exist, using everything from broken bottles to guns as weapons. Even in places where there was not a sharp rise, the kinds

of offenses changed. With the Child Welfare League of America, "juvenile problems" rose among the young, including delinquency, incorrigibility, and truancy. Girls and boys ran away from home, and had seen during the Depression looking for jobs that justified their behavior in urban areas where rules against child labor could earn more than even a minimum wage.

Newspaper editorials and public opinion turned their comment to juvenile delinquency into common use in 1942. The demand for freedom from parental supervision was high. These youngsters, with their own antiadult subculture with its own language and

On the other hand, among older teenagers, the war had found good jobs. When they were not, they focused attention on the maternal smothering. They had emotional problems, and they lived in close quarters, for example, in protective mothers, said Dr. E. S. Strecker, a psychiatrician. He blamed the blame. Mothers who were sent their children to child care of themselves were holding them too close.

Like the centers, the first of their kind, but most national attention was on recreation programs with rules. During the Depression, services architecturally limited swimming pools, and playgrounds took advantage of the time before school (some prohibition not eat at school, and at home came home. In community sessions, the after-school

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of offenses changed. Where there were military camps, what the Child Welfare League of America euphemistically called "teenage problems" rose among girls more than among boys. Sex delinquency, incorrigibility, drinking, and rates of venereal disease shot up. Girls and boys ran away, forming the kinds of gangs the country had seen during the Depression when they roamed from city to city looking for jobs that just weren't there. Now they ran to war production areas where rules against child labor had been relaxed and they could earn more than ever before.

Newspaper editorials in 1943 and 1944 devoted 11 percent of their comment to juvenile delinquency—a term that had just come into common use in 1942. Another word generated by the relative freedom from parental supervision of the war years was "teenager." These youngsters, with their newfound money, developed a separate, antiadult subculture with its own music, dress, and language.

On the other hand, some kinds of delinquency, particularly among older teenagers, decreased as they entered the armed forces or found good jobs. When they joined the military, young men focused attention on the reverse of the problem of maternal neglect—maternal smothering. Three million men were rejected because they had emotional problems—they were too fearful, or unable to live in close quarters, for example—that made them unfit to fight. Overprotective mothers, said many experts, including Dr. Edward A. Strecker, a psychiatric consultant to the army and navy, were to blame. Mothers who were afraid of being seen as rejecting if they sent their children to child-care centers or let the older ones take care of themselves were now accused of hurting their children by holding them too close.

Like the centers, Lanham Act after-school programs were not the first of their kind, but they were the most widespread and got the most national attention. Schools had been providing after-school recreation programs without fanfare as a normal part of their schedules. During the Depression, WPA building efforts enshrined these services architecturally by funding schools with gymnasiums, swimming pools, and playgrounds. The Lanham Act extended-care centers took advantage of these facilities. Most were open a few hours before school (some provided breakfast), at lunch for those who did not eat at school, and after school until 6:00 or 6:30, when parents came home. In communities so crowded that schools were on double sessions, the after-school centers stayed open all day so that children

who attended only in the morning or the afternoon would have a place to go.

Other facilities also existed to pick up the after-school slack. Jewish children went to Hebrew School, Greeks studied their culture and so did the Chinese in four- or five-day after-school programs. The public library provided safe, supervised space, and town playgrounds were used for the same reason. Baltimore officials found children dropped off in the morning "stowing away" on the swings and slides waiting for a parent to pick them up after work.

Working mothers were less convinced of the need for after-school Lanham Act services than they were of the need for day care. For one thing, they felt school-age children could look after themselves for a few hours every day. For another, they balked at paying a fee—since schooling was free they felt after-school care should be, too. In Seattle, free after-school centers, provided by social agencies and churches, flourished while Lanham Act Centers were not full.

In California, whose programs reflected the best around the country, the extended-day-care centers were open before and after school, on Saturdays and holidays, and all summer long. They opened between 6:30 and 8:30 A.M. on both school and nonschool days. When there was no school, the children had outdoor play, handicrafts, music and drama clubs, and library reading. In the afternoons, with parental permission, they could be released to go to Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts or similar organizational meetings. From 4:30 to 6:00 on all days they had quiet games, indoor play, and "selected radio programs"—in the era before television. The children were often divided into age groups, with older children helping out with the younger ones as they would have done had they been at home. Good nutrition was an important part of the program, and the youngsters were given hot lunches and morning and afternoon snacks. If necessary, they could receive breakfast and dinner, too, at an extra charge of ten or fifteen cents. Fees for attendance varied and were usually a little lower than for all-day nursery-school care.

Innovative Solutions for Eight-Hour Orphans

Day-care centers were not the whole answer. They were too few, sometimes too far away, sometimes just unacceptable to parents who continued to be ambivalent about having their children in a formal group setting. Young children were still left with grandmothers or

neighbors, but even this. People moved to where and friends who might dated with half a million months. In Texarkana towns and tent cities spiraled from thirty the

Even if parents no women who could do to make more money work farms. In 1942 in Jackson children of women working domestic servants. But to get better-paying jobs to try and agriculture, and fact: Their traditional pattern was disrupted as the care got jobs, too. Requests increased, as parents tried. Inevitably, some were leaving working mothers in ten that "the fact stands out care of young children a substantial proportion of their care while the work question "Who's mindir particular."

Desperate mothers earlier generation—they with their children during day shifts for men, so work it. But for some this provision on an assembly line, then children the next day, so Manpower Commission. into the labor force; eight and wife working they a could be home with the solution. Some children work more when the shifts closed

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wer. They were too few, acceptable to parents who heir children in a formal ft with grandmothers or

neighbors, but even this traditional method felt the strain of the war. People moved to where the war jobs were and left behind families and friends who might have helped out. California alone was inundated with half a million workers from other states within a few months. In Texarkana (twin cities in Texas and Arkansas), shanty towns and tent cities sprouted along highways as the population skyrocketed from thirty thousand to fifty thousand.

Even if parents now had extra money to pay for child care, women who could do this job were in short supply. They, too, could make more money working in war factories, in canneries, or on farms. In 1942 in Jackson, Mississippi, a survey showed that half the children of women working in war factories were cared for by black domestic servants. But many of these black women were later able to get better-paying jobs than had ever been available to them in industry and agriculture, and the improved job market had a domino effect: Their traditional pattern of child care for their own children was disrupted as the caretakers—grandmothers and other relatives—got jobs, too. Requests for foster care and institutional placement increased, as parents tried desperately to find havens for their children. Inevitably, some were left to fend for themselves. A federal study of working mothers in ten defense industry areas in 1944–45 concluded that "the fact stands out . . . from examination of the reports on the care of young children of wartime-employed mothers, that in a substantial proportion of the households no real provision was made for their care while the woman worker was absent." The answer to the question "Who's minding the kids?" seems to have been "No one in particular."

Desperate mothers tried another strategy that had served an earlier generation—they chose the night shift so they could be home with their children during the day. Unions saved the more desirable day shifts for men, so women requesting night work were likely to get it. But for some this proved too taxing. They could not work all night on an assembly line, then shop and cook and clean and care for their children the next day, so they quit. (Paul McNutt, head of the War Manpower Commission, estimated that for every ten women coming into the labor force, eight left it.) In some families with both husband and wife working they arranged for different shifts, so one of them could be home with the children. But this, too, was not a perfect solution. Some children were left alone for the forty-five minutes or more when the shifts changed. Others were cared for by a "daily

minder" who stayed with them until a parent came home.

The war emergency also forced larger-scale innovations. In Los Angeles in 1943, the Gale Manor Apartments, occupied only by working parents and their children, developed a comprehensive day-care center on the first floor. The fifty-two families had sixty children needing care. Every morning at 6:30 parents dropped their children off at the center as they left for work, usually in a war factory. The six- and seven-year-olds were later convoyed across the street to school and escorted back for lunch and after-school activities. The eighteen-month-olds to five-year-olds participated in the usual nursery-school activities. After lunch the toddlers took off their shoes and socks (to keep from dirtying the apartments) and were tucked into their own beds for naps, with the woman who ran the center and her helper acting as watchful angels.

By six o'clock parents usually claimed their children. The cost was fifteen dollars per child per month. Sick children were accepted but kept isolated from the other children, and arrangements could even be made if a mother had to work overtime or the night shift. For an extra twenty-five cents youngsters were fed supper, read a story, and again tucked into their own beds, which were patrolled until at least one parent returned home.

One of the problems in encouraging mothers to work during the war was that they had a higher absentee rate than men, staying home twice as often, since they had primary responsibility for the children. In California's San Fernando Valley the Office of Civilian Defense noticed that absenteeism in defense factories was highest on Saturdays, when children were home from school. They started a playground project to keep these children safe and happy so their mothers could still go to work. But they did it against vocal opposition, reflecting the ambivalence of a society that actively recruited mothers as workers but felt, deep down, that they should stay home. One man who opposed the San Diego project said petulantly that if women were really patriotic they would leave the factories and stay with their children. Women were becoming too emancipated anyway, he said, and providing child care would only make things worse.

Women's absenteeism reflected their triple roles as workers, mothers, and wives. They were the ones who stayed home with a young child whose baby-sitting arrangements fell through, or when a school-age child was on vacation or sick; they still had to cook the meals, do the shopping, and stay attractive to the men who were

building the bombers or industries addressed the speed.

In Portland, Oregon, the largest in the country from eighteen months to most of the costs, supplied daily a day. The nursery was twenty-four hours a day, and their parents as well, by providing that could be ordered in *Saturday Evening Post* corner of the importance of childminding babies is more evident than the inauguration of fine things that come under

In addition, since, a whose basic interest is in labor relations and cut down that might take a woman plant. In the Midwest, at beauty parlor where the parent in the toolroom. The Ottumwa turned Friday lunch hour ment store bringing twenty array of merchandise including, foodstuffs, cosmetics them delivered to their homes late. No more wasted days.

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g mothers to work during the war. The pay rate was lower than men, staying at a minimum responsibility for the family. The Office of Civilian Control said that the pay in these factories was highest on a minimum school. They started a minimum safe and happy so their children did it against vocal opposition that actively recruited children that they should stay home. The subject said petulantly that if they gave the factories and staying home too emancipated anybody and only make things worse. The triple roles as workers, mothers, who stayed home with children, fell through, or when a mother they still had to cook the meals for the men who were

building the bombers or fighting for freedom. A few vital wartime industries addressed these needs as a way to keep production at high speed.

In Portland, Oregon, the Kaiser shipyard's nursery school was the largest in the country, serving fifteen hundred children aged from eighteen months to six years in three shifts. Federal funds paid most of the costs, supplemented by a fee of seventy-five cents a family a day. The nursery school stayed open twelve months a year, twenty-four hours a day, and its kitchen fed not only the children but their parents as well, by providing hot, inexpensive, take-home meals that could be ordered in the morning and picked up at night. The *Saturday Evening Post* commented in surprise on this new awareness of the importance of child care: "Industry may, in fact, find that minding babies is more essential to the production of dive bombers than the inauguration of a speed-up system or any other of the routine things that come under the heading of labor relations."

In addition, since, as a popular magazine put it, "a girl's a girl," whose basic interest is in frills and fashion, another way to improve labor relations and cut down on absenteeism was to bring services that might take a woman away from her lathe right into the war plant. In the Midwest, an electrical company set up a three-person beauty parlor where the paint shop had been, and a cosmetic counter in the toolroom. The Otis Elevator Company's aeronautical division turned Friday lunch hours into shopping time, with a local department store bringing twenty clerks, a pharmacist, and a kaleidoscopic array of merchandise into the factory. Women could choose clothing, foodstuffs, cosmetics, household utensils, and even hats and have them delivered to their homes the next day. Other stores stayed open late. No more wasted days away from work for bargain hunting.

Some women spoke up to support working women. A study of the needs of women war workers by two female Syracuse University students suggested such revolutionary (and “communistic”) services as more nursery schools, centralized food preparation and laundries, a five-day workweek, and elimination of overtime to ease their load. (In 1910, Charlotte Perkins Gilman had suggested central kitchens, day care, and professional house cleaners to allow women to work. Her ideas never left the printed page.) After this burst of utopian thinking, the researchers acknowledged that “undesirable standardization” of home life might be the result and recognized that if women had free time they might “waste it.”

Catherine Mackenzie, an outraged *New York Times* columnist, reacted with: "The notion that women will get into mischief if they get a minute to relax and take a deep breath is very old indeed. People once said that if women didn't spend the whole day basting and turning things over an open fire they'd be up to no good; it was a strong argument against the introduction of the cooking stove. A threat to the home, that's what it is."

Ambivalence continued to haunt women who had not yet entered the workforce but were faced with that possibility and the threats it might pose to their primary purpose—wifehood and motherhood. In 1944 sociologist Mirra Komarovsky called standards for women "a veritable crazy quilt of contradiction." Half of the young college women questioned in her survey of their expectations for the future said they expected to stop work permanently when they married, and only 10 percent said they hoped to combine marriage and a career. (The war experience did not seem to have altered basic assumptions about women's roles.) Dr. Komarovsky campaigned for greater freedom: "The girl who wishes to marry and have five children should be permitted to do so, and likewise it should be made possible for those who wish to combine marriage and careers to achieve this. At present, the latter path is fraught with difficulties and cruel dilemmas, but it needn't be." On the same page in *The New York Times* in which Komarovsky's survey was reported, Senator Taft of Ohio was quoted as supporting reduced funds for Lanham Act Centers lest they be carried over, surreptitiously, for use after the war and encourage women to leave home.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of day care for the children of working mothers and the hopes of those who had demonstrated their muscle and skills in what were traditionally men's occupations, the country was not yet ready for large numbers of women, particularly mothers, to remain in the labor force. A *Fortune* magazine poll shortly after the war showed that most Americans did not approve of a woman working if her husband could support her and felt that her job was staying home and caring for her children. A New York newspaper labeled the idea of day care "a communist plot." The "Iron Curtain" had succeeded the uneasy wartime alliance, and the evil Soviet Union was a pioneer in providing public nursery schools for working women. There was also economic reality. The boys were coming home and needed whatever jobs would be left when the wartime boom collapsed. In 1945, the year the war ended, 11,650,000

women from twenty to twenty-five years) were working; by 1946, 12,000,000.

The chairman of the War Relocation Authority's Manpower Commission reported that during the war, married women were working at home. She saw two reasons why. One was that the birth of children quickened the pace of life. The other was the best taken care of in the home. In addition there was the "feminine" influence that has come to wage earners." Women were believed in that motherhood came the expected, full-time time women spent in the home.

The war did not change the long-held assumption that men had occurred that men who left the labor force in 1940 were almost twice the number of women who had been working in 1940. For children, so far as anyone could tell, had been cared for in groups. Women had become a new force. Twenty or thirty years ago, middle-class children's mothers had not worked. The long-held assumption

Support and Dismay

During the war necessity for young children, and the support of this unprecedented change. Dr. Leo Kanner, a psychologist, and R. H. Blank of the National Bureau of Child Hygiene, both agreed that the stages for both mother and child were more readily than those of the mother and quarreling" between some time apart during being a somebody and

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women from twenty to forty-four years of age (the childbearing years) were working; by 1950, there were 10,187,000.

The chairman of the Womanpower Committee of the War Manpower Commission in the Cleveland area foresaw that, after the war, married women with young children would be told to stay home. She saw two reasons for this: “The consciousness of the value of children quickened through war and the belief that the child is best taken care of in the home by his mother” were strengthened. In addition there was the “alarm, already expressed, at the new independence that has come to married women from their experience as wage earners.” Women were also told by the magazines they read and believed in that motherhood was their duty and their privilege. It became the expected, full-time job. Between the 1920s and the 1960s the time women spent in child care almost doubled.

The war did not change fundamental attitudes. Yet subtle shifts had occurred that manifested themselves only later. Many women who left the labor force immediately after the war rejoined it. By 1952 almost twice the number of married women were working as had been working in 1940. Day care had been demystified. Young children, so far as anyone could tell, had not been harmed because they had been cared for in groups without their mothers. And middle-class women had become accustomed to unaccustomed independence. Twenty or thirty years after the war, these changes made it routine for middle-class children to attend nursery school, for women whose mothers had not worked to take jobs, and for society to begin to question long-held assumptions about the needs of children.

Support and Dismay

During the war necessity forced governmental funding of child care for young children, and independent psychological research supported this unprecedented move for those from two to five years old. Dr. Leo Kanner, a psychiatrist at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, and R. H. Blank of the Baltimore Child Study Home found advantages for both mother and child if the child was in nursery school while the mother worked. Such children became “social beings” more readily than those who stayed home, and “friction, nagging and quarreling” between mother and child decreased if they had some time apart during the day. When a mother had the “feeling of being a somebody and of doing something worthwhile,” family life

improved, and so did her relationship with her husband.

This supportive finding, however, did not challenge the basic assumption that a mother's care was necessary for the well-being of the very young child. Anna Freud put it this way: "The needs of the growing child which override all others [are]: the need for intimate interchange with a maternal figure; the need for ample and constant external stimulation of innate potentialities; and the need for unbroken continuity of care." What happened was that the definition of "very young" was subtly transformed. Nursery schools were now laudable for two- to five-year-olds, but mothers of younger children had to stay home or risk serious damage. Before the war, "young children" had been those under school age; now, in response to cultural compulsion, the dangerous age dropped to below the age of two. Above that age, mothers need not feel guilty about leaving their children in someone else's care.

Social workers, taught to see the early mother-child tie as absolutely essential to normal development and traditionally against separating mother and child, were caught in a dilemma. They were reluctant to support or encourage preschool child care, yet this was just what the country needed. The alternatives were no care, or inadequate care, or downright neglect that showed up in their caseloads. As experience demonstrated that the centers were not bad for most children (although, of course, some did not do well), their opposition subsided. Perhaps it was better for children to be cared for by professionals than by relatives such as grandmothers and older siblings who were untrained amateurs. Just as motherhood was professionalized at the turn of the century by the followers of G. Stanley Hall, who warned that parents had to be just as trained as lawyers or doctors, so early child care was professionalized when teachers went into day-care centers, first under the WPA and then under the Lanham Act.

Although Freudian thinking permeated the professional debate about child care, many mothers were still in the practical grip of Dr. Watson and his behaviorist theories as far as everyday living was concerned. Only 9 or 10 percent of the children studied in two Lanham Act California nursery schools had been breast-fed until weaned; almost half had been on a strict feeding schedule, Watson's four-hour regimen. The mothers were concerned about following the best advice they could find, and three-fifths of them read *Parents' Magazine* during their child's first year.

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with him as much as you wanted to [during the first year], or did you restrain yourself because of advice someone had given, or for some other reason?" More than 80 percent said they had been affectionate, but some said they avoided too much handling in response to a physician's advice—again, the shadow of Watson's theories. One family that had lost their first child later had a son and "wanted to give him the best—so no one picked him up [unnecessarily] until he was one year old." By nursery-school age the boy was distant and disliked being touched or held.

The bewildering and contradictory advice given to mothers led one of them to conduct her own experiment. "I'm trying various systems," she told the nursery-school researcher. She "was strict with the first, not with the second, and strict again with the third child." The results have not been recorded. As for fathers, almost 20 percent of them neither played with nor took over any of the routine care of their infants. Most of the mothers—and the experts—felt the nursery-school experience had benefited their children.

After the war it was no longer necessary to document the value of care by someone other than the mother: Once again, mothers would harm their children if they left them with other people. In the early 1950s Margaret Mead protested against the increased emphasis on mother and child staying home together: "Under the guise of exalting the importance of maternity [we] are tying women more tightly to their children than has been thought necessary since the invention of bottle feeding and baby carriages," she wrote.

Researchers and theoreticians are as much a part of the culture in which they operate as the people they choose to study, and their conclusions reflect the biases of their time and place. Neither they nor their research exist in a vacuum. During the war the myth of the ever-present mother gave way to the myth of the "supermom" who could juggle home, children, and job without shortchanging any of them. "Supermom" appeared again in the 1960s, a resurrection of Rosie the Riveter, who had to "do it all" with whatever help—public or private—she could find.

After the War

The Lanham Act Centers for both nursery-age and school-age children were criticized because they served only from 10 to 40 percent of the children who needed supervision while their mothers worked.

But when they were threatened with lowered funds as the war came to a close, and then phased out, they were generally praised as having done a good job. *Parents' Magazine* editorialized, "This service to children must not be abandoned."

The centers were to close six months after the war's end, but commonsense protesters pointed out that many men were not yet home and their wives had to continue to work. The closings were postponed until February 1946. A spokesman for nine social agencies protesting the cutoff complained to President Truman, "The Federal Government is without a policy concerning children" and suggested that long-range planning was necessary. This was just what opponents had feared when the centers were first established—that they would be permanent, not temporary, and would make it easier for mothers to do what they should not do—work outside the home. In December 1945, with the war over and the end of federal funds in sight, the California State Department of Education examined its own program and observed that "there has been a rather remarkable change in the public attitude towards group care of children. At its inception three years ago, mothers were inclined to view with suspicion the government suggestion that child care centers could be satisfactory for their children. Now, after several years of experience, and if the loud clamor over the threatened closing of centers may be interpreted as an index of their collective appraisal of the merit of the program, they are surprisingly well pleased, not only that release for employment is possible, but also with respect to the influence on the lives of their children."

California was the only state in which the program survived permanently, although gradually it metamorphosed into publicly funded day care for the children of poor, usually single, mothers. Even today, some prefabricated buildings shipped to school grounds to serve as nursery schools during the Lanham Act era fifty years ago are still in use—although now they house administrators rather than children. The child care takes place in public school buildings

The war and the centers went away, but the questions they raised did not. The nation was not ready to face the implications of the success of the wartime child-care centers. That success challenged basic views of the role of women, the best way to care for young children, and the balance of power within a family in which both parents work. American women have taken on nontraditional jobs in every war since they made musket balls in the Civil War, and

after every war they have observed, "Women were to go back home and run home, they never forgot to have to be just a home. And so we've got this new

But the new generation of great social changes in men came back and with a new place, despite her different. Best-selling novel when she said in the early moved from a privileged open to women, for what proved to be more common women were once again lowered orders.

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after every war they have gone back home, but as a crane operator observed, "Women were different in World War II: They didn't want to go back home and many of them didn't. And if they did go back home, they never forgot, and they told their daughters, 'You don't have to be just a homemaker. You can be anything you want to be.' And so we've got this new generation of women."

But the new generation did not spring up immediately. The great social changes in women's roles during the war faded once the men came back and women were expected to return to their traditional place, despite hopes and predictions that things would be different. Best-selling novelist Margaret Culkin Banning was mistaken when she said in the early 1940s that the idea of women working had moved from a privilege to an obligation and that almost all jobs were open to women, for whom the future was boundless. The near future proved to be more constricting than she had thought. In the 1950s women were once again told to stay home, and many of them followed orders.

Years later, Hanne Sonquist, a California nursery-school administrator who considers the success of the Lanham Act Centers a model for nationally supported, comprehensive child care, told an interviewer, "We've done it and don't choose to look at it. How quickly we repressed that movement after the war. The standard line is 'Mothers should be home with their kids'—the guilt quotient is enormous. The choices in our society to date have never been in support of children, families and women. I personally am unwilling to say society is not able—we are not willing."