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PLANNING FOR A NATIONAL SOCIAL POLICY FOR THE FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

The American family performs two important functions for family members - providing physical care and socialization, and meeting psychological needs. Current family trends suggest that the American family may be having difficulty in carrying out these basic functions. Since the United States lacks a comprehensive family policy, it is argued that a national social policy should be created to better support the American family. A social policy is presented which would assist the American family in performing its basic functions. A suggested strategy for implementation of this family social policy has also been developed.

This paper contends that the United States lacks a coherent, comprehensive family social policy to assist the American family. It is the author's opinion that current programs designed to assist the American family are uncoordinated, fragmented, and generally ineffective. This position is shared by others who have analyzed programs designed to support the American family.

Romanyshyn argues that the United States has little in the way of a national family policy. He feels that the lack of a national family policy undermines the American family in performing its basic functions.¹ Costin also suggests that the United States lacks a comprehensive and explicit national family policy. She claims that national and state governments have created new programs that have a significant effect on individual family members; however, these programs lack real impact on the family as a social unit in society.² In a recent article, Kamerman and Kahn discuss the consequences of the government's fragmented approach to supporting the American family and make a case for an explicit and cohesive policy to support the American

family.³ In essence, there are a number of social scientists who share the author's opinion.

A number of topics related to the American family and family social policy will be presented in this paper. The author will discuss the changing functions of the American family, present the statistical trends that help one to understand what the American family is experiencing, and discuss the problems of current programs in their efforts to support the family in a changing milieu. A model family social policy designed to better assist the American family in performing its basic functions will be proposed and the author will present a suggested approach for implementation of this proposed family policy.

Family Functions and Social Change

It has been suggested in the social scientific literature that the American family has lost many of its traditional functions due to a plethora of reasons, including industrialization and urbanization of American society. According to Bert Adams, some of the important functions once provided by the family were education, religious training, recreation, and protection. It also served as a self-sufficient economic unit to support family members. Adams feels that many of these traditional functions have been taken over by other social institutions.⁴

Burgess and Locke align themselves with the family "loss of function" theory. It is their position that the family has lost all functions other than the affectional.⁵ William F. Ogburn speaks of the transfer of all the family's functions to other social institutions, except the affectional.⁶ Carle Zimmerman presents a similar theme. He suggests that the family has evolved to the atomistic form, which is a family form having little influence and function in society.⁷ Robert Winch goes so far as to say that the family not only has lost its functions, but also that society no longer needs the familial system to survive.⁸ In essence, there are a number of social scientists who advocate the so called family "loss of function" theory.

Adams feels that there are some problematic aspects with the "loss of function" theory concerning the family. He purports that one gets the impression from this literature that the family has become a weakened social institution

which is "twiddling its collective thumbs" for want of responsibilities or activities. Adams feels that this is an incorrect representation on two counts: first, the family is still very much involved in the coordinating of physical care and of socialization. Second, while much family unit interaction occurs in the interstices of other societal institutions, there is an increasingly overt and central involvement of the family unit in meeting the psychological needs of its members.⁹

The author takes a position similar to Adams'. The author feels that there has been a shift of family functions to other social institutions; however, this shift does not mean that the family has become a less important social institution or that it has been necessarily weakened by these changes. The important point is that the family has gone through a variety of social changes which have re-defined what the family does for individual family members.

Furthermore, it is the opinion of the author that two of the more important functions of the American family today are providing physical care and socialization, as well as meeting the psychological needs of family members. The author takes the normative position that these are two important functions the American family can perform quite well if given the proper support by society. It is a central assumption of this paper that a coherent, comprehensive family policy would greatly assist the American family in carrying out these important functions for family members.

Indicators of Family Trends

There are a variety of statistical reports which reflect changes occurring in the American family. These statistics help to illustrate the quantitative changes the family is experiencing. The author has chosen four basic trends which appear to suggest some of the significant changes occurring in the family; those being divorce, female role change, single-parent families, and reconstituted families. This does not mean that other trends are not affecting the American family, such as the increasing number of the elderly in the United States or the changing patterns of the American family as a consumption unit; the author has chosen these four trends to discuss because of the large body of statistical data available

and the apparent direct relation of these trends to the changing American family.

Divorce. The data is clear in illustrating that divorce is increasing at a fast pace in the United States. William Kephart reports that the population of the United States in 1867 was approximately 37 million; by 1975, the figure had grown to some 215 million. During the same period, the yearly number of divorces rose from 9,937 to 1,026,000 - a 100-fold increase. In other words, according to Kephart, divorces increased more than 17 times as fast as the population. He concludes that there will be roughly 10 million divorces granted during the present decade (1970-1980) and that the number of divorces will continue to rise in the future.¹⁰

Gerald R. Leslie reports similar results to Kephart's. He found that in 1946 there was 1 divorce for every 3.8 marriages and in 1970 1 divorce for every 3 marriages. Leslie states that after the post-World War II peak, divorce rates dropped and remained fairly stable for the period from 1955 to 1962. Then they began to climb again. From 413,000 divorces in 1962, there was a jump to 479,000 in 1965 and to 523,000 in 1967. Since 1967, the increase has accelerated until there were 970,000 divorces in 1974. Leslie theorizes that the number of divorces will continue to climb.¹¹

Another trend increasing with the divorce rate is the likelihood of divorcing couples to have one or more children. Kingsley Davis' findings indicate that during the years 1922-25, about 62 percent of divorcing couples were childless. Approximately 39.3 percent of divorcing couples were childless during the years 1965-69.¹² Paul C. Glick and Arthur J. Norton present similar findings. They claim that during the period 1953 to 1971, the number of children of divorced parents tripled.¹³ Robert R. Bell's findings concur with the above. Bell found that in 1922, only 34 percent of all divorces involved children, but by 1965, 60 percent of all divorces involved children. Bell claims there are about 1 million children under the age of 18 living in one-parent homes after the divorce of their parents.¹⁴

The above statistical reports, as interpreted by these social scientists, imply that the number of divorces in the United States is increasing and that more children

are being involved in divorces. There is some indication that the number of divorces will continue to climb and that the number of divorcing parents with children will continue to increase.

Female role change. The role of the female in American society appears to be changing. One of the major movements that is changing the female role is the increased participation of women in the labor force. The number of women in the labor force increased 68 percent from 1940 to 1973.¹⁵ The growing trend of women going into the labor force, no doubt, is having an effect on the American family.

Between 1950 and 1975, there was a three-fold increase in the number of women seeking work who had husbands in the home and children under the age of six.¹⁶ Robert R. Bell reports that in 1968, 42 percent of all women of working age were in the labor force and of that group, three out of five were married.¹⁷ In 1975, 52 percent of married women with children aged 6-17 and 37 percent of those with children under 6 were either working or looking for work.¹⁸

A 1974 national survey by the Institute of Life Insurance found that only about one in four young women intended to spend little or no time working in the labor force.¹⁹ Bell also reports that nine out of ten women work outside the home at some time during their lives.²⁰

Single-parent family. The number of families headed by a single parent is on the increase. The vast majority of these single-parent families are headed by females. In 1975, 15 percent of all families were headed by women; in 1960, the figure was only 9 percent.²¹ Between 1970 and 1975, there was a 45 percent increase in the number of children living with their single-parent mother.²² The reported number of female-headed families is large. In 1970, there were 5.6 million families headed by females. The number rose to 7.2 million by 1975.²³

Black families have a much higher proportion of female heads than do white families. In 1975, the percentage of children under 18 in single-parent families was 13 percent for whites and 43 percent for blacks.²⁴ This finding suggests that the phenomenon of female-headed families may be correlated with one's race. A definite correlation

does exist between the female-headed family and poverty. The female-headed family accounts for almost 40 percent of those families below the poverty level.²⁵

Reconstituted families. The rising number of divorces in the United States has played a factor in creating more reconstituted families. The reconstituted family is the family in which at least one of the parents has been married before.

In 1975, research reported that 80 percent of those who divorce later married.²⁶ A large proportion of those who are divorced have children by previous marriages. This same research found that more than 30 percent of children under 18 in the United States were not living with both natural parents.²⁷ As the evidence suggested earlier, more divorces now involve children and the majority of divorced people remarry. The apparent result of this social phenomenon, in the author's opinion, is that the reconstituted family is becoming more common in the United States and will involve even more American families in the future with the increasing number of divorces and remarriages.

Analysis of family trends. The previously presented family trends will be analyzed in light of the two important functions the author assumes the American family can provide if given the proper support by society. Those functions are providing physical care and socialization, and meeting psychological needs of family members.

The problem associated with divorce can be interpreted in a variety of fashions; however, there seem to be two main themes. One, a divorce is a mechanism by which one can find "true" marital satisfaction. Therefore, the increasing divorce rate is seen as a "positive" phenomenon because individuals are searching for a quality marriage by going through a series of remarriages. Two, the increasing divorce rate is seen as an indicator of the decline of the family. The rise in the divorce rate suggests that the family is of less value to the individual as a social unit. The author feels that both of these positions are equally valid; however, they are not the main focus of this paper.

The author is concerned with divorce as it relates to the family function of meeting psychological needs of family members. It has been suggested that the family is

the "giant shock absorber" of society - the place to which the bruised and battered individual returns after doing battle with the world.²⁸ This theory may be a little too dramatic; however, the author agrees with it in part. This paper takes the position that the family offers the individual a place where he can receive affection and intimate associations which are not readily found in everyday interaction between people. In other words, the family is a system which can offer much psychological satisfaction to the individual.

There is some recent research which tends to support the above assumption. A Yankelovich study of 2,502 families found that the most highly rated personal values expressed were related to family life.²⁹ Another study reports that family satisfaction is the highest predictor of general well-being experienced by individuals.³⁰ This kind of research suggests that the family is important to family members and that the family can provide the self with a sense of well-being. It is the author's opinion that the problem with divorce is that it many times disrupts the "positive" aspects derived from family life, such as those discussed above. In other words, the problematic aspect of divorce may be that it prevents family members from receiving the psychological support provided by family life.

The author thus concludes that the family which is experiencing divorce, or that has already experienced divorce, may have very special needs in the area of psychological functioning. Expanded family social services to meet these special needs may be one way in which society could be more supportive of the family affected by divorce. Also, there appears to be little research on the long-range consequences of divorce on individuals. Thus another way in which society might be more supportive of the family affected by divorce would be to do more research on the long-range results of divorce on family members.

The increased participation of women in the labor force is apparently redefining the role of the female in the family. Research appears to support this assumption by suggesting that a wife's employment outside the home profoundly alters the family division of labor.³¹ In fact, some research shows that this shift in the division of labor increases conflict in the family.³² However, the author's main concern with increased female participation in the labor force is not the "problems" associated

with the altered family division of labor, but the physical care and socialization of children who are a part of the family where both parents work.

A growing awareness is developing concerning the apparent lack of daycare facilities available to families where both parents work. According to current research, daycare in licensed centers and family homes is available for only 905,000 children. It is estimated that several million children need this service.³³ The family where both parents work would benefit from expanded daycare facilities for children, as well as the single-parent family in which the parent is employed. This could be one way that society might assist families with working parents in providing physical care and socialization of children.

The increasing number of single-headed families may be defined as an area of concern in analyzing family trends. The question is whether the single-parent family has adequate economic means to provide the necessary family function of physical care and socialization of children.

Williams and Stockton found that single-parent families were more likely to have lower job stability, less money per family member, less adequate housing, and limited health care.³⁴ As reported earlier, a large number of female-headed families are below the poverty level. This lack of economic support probably seriously challenges many poverty stricken single-headed families in providing physical care and adequate socialization for family members. In essence, society could probably be more supportive of the single-headed family by insuring that it receives adequate economic support. No doubt, more effort in this area of economic support would also be helpful for other types of families falling below the poverty level.

The reconstituted family is the final area of concern. Since there is little social scientific information available on the reconstituted family, analyzing it in light of the two important functions which the author contends the American family can provide for family members would be difficult. Kephart states that the subject has been "underinvestigated" and only a few generalizations can be made about the reconstituted

family.³⁵ The author concludes that since the reconstituted family will probably increase in number as more parents divorce and remarry, a more coordinated effort researching the reconstituted family may be helpful to determine the needs of this kind of family.

Current Family Programs

This section is concerned with current programs that affect the American family. There are numerous programs which have an impact on the American family; however, the author will attempt to cover those which best illustrate the limitations of current efforts to assist the family. As stated earlier, it is the author's contention that a coherent and comprehensive social policy for the family does not exist in the United States.

Nathan E. Cohen and Maurice F. Connery state:

The majority of the programs that affect the family are directed toward only one area of family life, its economic security; moreover, this legislation largely reflects public policy in relation to the individual, with a neglect of the family as a unit of attention and concern.³⁶

Cohen and Connery appear to be getting at the root of the problem of current family programs; that is, these programs mainly emphasize economic security and have a tendency to support individuals in the family, not the family as a social unit.

There also appear to be several limitations related to the economic programs themselves: (1) they are fragmented efforts and do not offer enough economic support, and (2) they are emphasized over social services. The author will focus on several programs in relation to these limitations.

The United States is the only developed country which does not have a universal support program.³⁷ Kahn and Kamerman, in Not for the Poor Alone, found in their research that all the major industrial countries, except the United States, have some form of a significant family allowance program.³⁸ Some important efforts in the United States which appear to support the American family

are: (1) tax exemptions, (2) Social Security benefits, and (3) Aid for Families with Dependent Children.³⁹ One of the criticisms of these support efforts is that they affect families differently; that is, the level of support varies for different families and not all families qualify for support.

The focus on economic support programs over social services results in many family needs going unmet. The quality of social services varies from state to state. State governments have a great impact on the kinds of social services offered; this creates much diversity and complexity in the delivery of these social services.⁴⁰

There have been some coordinated efforts to decrease this variance in social services offered by states. In general, they appear to be not too successful. A number of amendments have been made to the Social Security Act over the last several years that are aimed at providing improved family social services. The 1962 and 1967 amendments to the Social Security Act were attempts to upgrade social services for certain kinds of families. The 1962 amendment emphasized social services which would rehabilitate the AFDC family; unfortunately, Congress failed to appropriate money to train additional staff to offer these services.⁴¹ The 1967 amendment brought the administration of Child Welfare Services and AFDC into a single organizational unit at both the state and county levels, a move which hopefully would increase coordinated planning and delivery of services for children and their families.⁴² However, some parts of the amendment, such as the WIN program, were highly criticized by many social welfare professionals.⁴³ A more recent addition to the Social Security Act, Title XX, was passed by the 93rd Congress. One of the stated national goals of Title XX is "preventing or remedying neglect, abuse, or exploitation of children and adults not able to protect their own interests; and preserving, rehabilitating, or reuniting families."⁴⁴ The verdict is not in yet on Title XX; however, it is the opinion of the author that since states have a great deal of discretion in the development of social services under Title XX, the quality will vary significantly from state to state.

There is a plethora of family social services offered

by non-governmental social service agencies. A high proportion of the families they serve are middle class.⁴⁵ Consequently, a major limitation of these social service agencies is that they are not reaching enough families. In essence, they add another layer to the fragmented family social services offered to various families in need.

Therefore, the problem of many programs affecting the family is not only that they emphasize mainly economic support over social services, but also that they are not readily available to all families. It is the position of this paper that a comprehensive economic support program for the American family, as well as comprehensive family social services, are vital components of a coherent, comprehensive family social policy. The economic support should be enough to insure the family of being able to function in society. The social services should be available to all families in order to meet their social needs.

Another major limitation of current family programs, alluded to earlier by Cohen and Connery, is that they continue to reflect individual bias and they neglect the family as a unit of concern. Romanyshyn argues that our emphasis is so powerful on the individual, that many programs designed to deal with social problems have tended to ignore the fact that the individual is part of a family unit. Even the program whose official rhetoric proclaims the goal of strengthening the family - Aid to Families with Dependent Children - is actually cast in the framework of individual needs and dependency, rather than family needs and the goal of family stability and development.⁴⁶

Clark Vincent, among others, reports empirical evidence that many social programs emphasize the individual over the family unit. He observed that the Eighty-ninth Congress in 1965 enacted 59 laws with implications for mental health. Yet the family was not included in any of the titles or subject areas of those pieces of social legislation. Vincent noted that the 1965 OEO catalog of Federal Programs for Individual and Community Improvement, containing 393 pages, does not even have the word "family" in its title. Moreover, the index contains only 3 indirect references to the family in 262 topical references

and only 13 such references in 563 subheadings.⁴⁷

Alvin Schorr also suggests that the individual has been emphasized over the family unit in our programs which affect the American family. He notes that the federal government contains a Children's Bureau and a Women's Bureau, but not a bureau for the family. Schorr claims that most research is not aimed at the family as a unit, but mainly concerns individuals in the family. According to Schorr, in 1960, a group of social scientists was to advise the Commissioner of Social Security on "priorities for sustaining and enriching family life." The serving of the individual in the context of the family turned out to be the framework of the majority of the social scientists' recommendations.⁴⁸

Two recent examples of federal legislation illustrate the continuing neglect of the family as a unit of attention. The Family Assistance Plan introduced in the early seventies and the Child and Family Services Act of 1975 were two bills designed specifically for the American family. The first bill would have guaranteed an income floor below which no family could fall and the latter bill would have provided daycare facilities, among other social services, for the family. Both bills failed to become federal legislation and thus appear to be additional examples of the lack of attention given to the American family as a social unit in current programming.

A Model National Policy for the American Family

Current programs that affect the American family do not appear to be responding to the ever changing needs of the family. Earlier in this paper, the author took the position that the increasing number of divorces, the changing role of the female, single-parent families, and reconstituted families, among other trends affecting the family, have created a whole new set of special family needs. As Margaret Mead once noted long ago, "We now expect a family to achieve alone what no society ever expected an individual family to accomplish unaided. In effect, we call upon the individual family to do what a whole clan used to do."⁴⁹ In light of current family trends, Mead's insight concerning the family appears to be more relevant than ever before.

A central assumption of this paper, as previously stated, is that there are two functions the American family can perform quite well - providing physical care and socialization, as well as meeting psychological needs of family members. Given adequate support, the American family can do an optimal job of carrying out these functions. Consequently, a family policy, in the author's opinion, should be designed to assist the family in carrying out these two important functions for family members.

There have been a number of proposed family policies over the last several years. Two recent research studies which give guidelines for a consistent, coherent family policy are Toward a National Policy for Children and Families by the National Research Council and All Our Children by Kenneth Keniston and The Carnegie Council on Children. It is the position of this paper that the proposals found within these reports contain the components of a comprehensive family social policy which could greatly assist the American family.

The Advisory Committee for the National Research Council, which wrote Toward a National Policy for Children and Families, recommends that the federal government take the lead in developing a comprehensive national policy for children and families. The essential components of their recommendations are:

- 1) Employment, tax, and cash benefit programs to assure each child's family an adequate income.
- 2) A broad and carefully integrated system of support services which would be available to families and children.
- 3) Planning and coordination mechanisms to insure adequate coverage and access of families to the full range of available services.⁵⁰

In order to implement this national policy, the Advisory Committee has suggested specific programs on economic resources, health care, child care, special services, and the delivery of services. The Advisory Committee also recommends research that would significantly improve the knowledge base for all programs concerning America's children.⁵¹

The second study All Our Children, by Keniston and The

Carnegie Council on Children, is similar to the recommendations made by the National Research Council. The Carnegie Council suggests a broad, well integrated, explicit family policy which has the following aspects:

- 1) Jobs for parents and a decent living standard would be available to all families. This would be accomplished through full employment, fair employment, and a decent minimum income level for all.
- 2) There would be support in the policy for more flexible working conditions. The demands of a parent's employment would conflict as little as possible with the needs of the family.
- 3) The policy would have an integrated network of family services. Federal standards for quality and fairness would be enacted for all family services.
- 4) The policy would have proper health care for all children as a goal with recognition of the fact that children's health depends as much on income, environment, and diet as it does on hospitals, nurses, and pediatricians.
- 5) Legal protection would be available for children outside and inside their families. The law would make every effort to keep families together.⁵²

These two research studies have many similarities. Both stress the importance of economic support for the family, health care for children, and family social services. They both appear to have as their main goal recognition of the family as a social unit; as reported earlier, the lack of this recognition has been a major limitation in many current programs.

Kamerman and Kahn suggest that no modern society can avoid programs which affect the family; the real choice is between deliberate, coherent programs or those of inconsistency and mischance.⁵³ The author agrees with this position and purports that the recommendations of the National Research Council and the Carnegie Council offer a viable choice to our current fragmented approach to assisting the family.

The model family policy which follows borrows heavily from each of these reports and includes those elements which the author feels are most important.

The main thrust of a comprehensive family social policy should be recognition of the family as an important social unit. That is, the family should be recognized as a social unit which performs very important functions for family members in the form of physical care, socialization, and meeting psychological needs. The author contends that this public recognition should lead to positive measures to protect and foster the American family and thus assist it in carrying out its important functions for family members. A statement from Berger and Neuhaus describes the needed social policy eloquently:

"(It) means public recognition of the family as an institution. It is not enough to be concerned for individuals more or less incidentally related to the family as an institution. Public recognition of the family as an institution is imperative because every society has an inescapable interest in how children are raised and how values are transmitted to the next generation."⁵⁴

The following proposals would deal with the issue of treating the family as a functioning social unit. These proposals would be the main components of a coherent, comprehensive family social policy:

- 1) There would be a universal support program for all families. A base economic level would be established which no family could fall below.
- 2) All families would be provided with comprehensive health care. Stress would be placed on total family health emphasizing diet, environment, and preventive health care.
- 3) There would be comprehensive family social services developed for the modern American family. The services offered would be child care, counseling services, and services for special problems such as permanent or temporary separation from the family. The major objective of family social services would be to help the

American family meet its basic functions for family members.

- 4) An expanded research effort to ascertain the current state of the American family and needed program changes would be established. The main goal of this research would be to further the understanding of the issues related to the family functioning as a social unit.

In final analysis, a comprehensive family social policy would be designed to provide a decent standard of living for all families, maximized health care for the family, expanded family social services, and research to gauge family needs.

Suggestions for Implementation

The author feels that two elements which must be considered in "realistic" policy-making in the United States are pluralism and incrementalism. This section offers a suggested strategy that includes these two elements in the development of a comprehensive family social policy. There are many strategies for the implementation of such a policy; this is but one.

Pluralism and the American family. It is the author's position that a guiding principle of a family social policy is awareness of the pluralistic nature of American society and of the social unit which functions as the American family. The majority of American families are nuclear. However, there are a number of family social units which do not fit the nuclear prototype. A family social policy should be flexible enough to recognize the pluralistic nature of the American family and should accommodate the less "typical" American family forms in the development of programs to assist the family.

Incrementalism. Charles Lindblom claims that most policy-making in the United States is incremental in nature. He feels that nonincremental policy proposals are typically not only politically irrelevant, but also unpredictable.⁵⁵ With these assumptions in mind, a family policy which is revolutionary in nature is probably currently unacceptable in the United States; therefore, gradualism is the process by which a comprehensive family policy would most likely be able to develop. In the author's opinion, this essentially

translates into the building and reforming of current programs which could become potential component parts of a comprehensive family social policy. The author is also cognizant of Lindblom's position that currently only degrees of comprehensiveness can be achieved in American policy-making.⁵⁶ The author basically concurs with this position.

Therefore, in light of Lindblom's position on policy-making and considering the pluralistic nature of the American family, the author has developed the following suggested proposals.

Suggested proposals. Economic support, health care, family social services, and family research are the component parts of the author's model family social policy. The author feels that these component parts might be realized through reforms in the Social Security Act and the development of a "Family Bureau."

A universal economic support program for all American families could be built into the Social Security Act as an additional amendment. Since the inception of the Social Security Act in 1935, programs have been gradually expanded in scope and benefit levels.⁵⁷ The expanding nature of the Social Security Act suggests that it could be amended to create a base economic level below which no American family could fall. The amendment might also establish an allowance for families which are above the minimum economic level; this allowance could contribute to the costs of child rearing or meeting other family needs. There is some evidence that there is a movement toward a universal economic support program in the United States; an example of this movement is the recent passage of the Supplemental Security Income Program.⁵⁸

A comprehensive health care program for the American family might be possible through another amendment to the Social Security Act. The Medicare program offers the nucleus to such an expanded program. Eliminating the age requirement and opening up eligibility to everyone would be a beginning step. The goal would be not only to protect people against health costs by payment of a reasonable monthly premium, but also to expand the program to include preventive health care. The main objective would be to insure that all families have access to health care.

The development of the next two components of a comprehensive family social policy, family social services and expanded family research, would be through the creation of a "Family Bureau." The Children's Bureau and Women's Bureau, at the federal level, might be combined to create this "Family Bureau." It would appear that many of the concerns of these two bureaus might be accomplished through a "Family Bureau." The "Family Bureau" would serve as a coordinator of family social services and research gauging family needs, among other functions.

As focused on earlier in this paper, social services for the family are extremely fragmented and vary in "quality" from state to state. One possible solution to decrease this variance is the implementation of a voucher system which would be available to all families. Under the voucher system, the holder of a voucher would be expected to find his own supplier of social services and the supplier in turn would be compensated by submitting the voucher to the appropriate agency.⁵⁹ The appropriate agency would be the proposed "Family Bureau." The quality of service would be enhanced by stipulation of the payer agency, and in some cases only suppliers meeting certain conditions would be permitted to receive compensation.⁶⁰ The "Family Bureau" would function as the payer agency in determining the quality of family social services being offered; this would help insure high standards in agencies. A voucher system would give low income families access to family social services they may now be denied and would also theoretically expand the market of agencies offering family social services.

A "Family Bureau" would also serve as coordinator of expanded research concerning the American family. This bureau might award a series of research grants to colleges and universities to investigate relevant social scientific issues concerning the family. There are also other approaches to procuring this needed research. The objective of this research would be to utilize this information in the ongoing development of programs which would be a part of a comprehensive family social policy. Without such research, it would be difficult to ascertain the changing needs of the American family and to develop new programs to assist the family.

These are only a limited number of suggestions that

might be possibilities for developing a comprehensive social policy for the family. One might argue that the incremental approach to social policy-making results in "watered down" social policy having little effect on intended purposes. Some may consider Yehezkel Dror's metapolicy orientation as the most appropriate approach for creation of a comprehensive family social policy.⁶¹ Others may support David Gil's contention that "consciousness raising," which would enable people to realize that their self interests are being served, is the most effective mechanism for "truly" comprehensive social policy-making.⁶² In final analysis, the potential approaches for implementing a comprehensive social policy for the American family are multiple.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the position that a coherent, comprehensive family social policy does not currently exist in the United States. The author is not alone in such a contention; several leading advocates who support this position were cited.

Social theory was presented which helped to support the position that the functions of the American family have changed. It was suggested that two functions which the American family can perform effectively are providing physical care and socialization, as well as meeting psychological needs of family members. A series of statistical data was analyzed to illustrate the changes the American family is currently experiencing. Family trends in the areas of divorce, female role change, single-parent families, and reconstituted families were chosen because of the large body of statistical data available and the apparent direct relation of these trends to the American family.

The author developed a model family social policy guided by two recent studies by the National Research Council and The Carnegie Council on Children. This comprehensive family policy was designed to provide a decent standard of living for all families, health care for the family, family social services, and research to gauge family needs. It was suggested that these component parts of a comprehensive family policy would be aimed at helping the American family to carry out its functions in modern society. A suggested approach for implementation was also presented based on

Lindblom's position concerning social policy-making.

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