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HEADLINE: Your Kids Are Their Problem

BYLINE: By Lisa Belkin; Lisa Belkin is a contributing writer for the magazine. She writes the Life's **Work** column for the Workplace section of The Times.

BODY:

Jason Gill is clocking 80 miles an hour in his green Miata convertible, heading north out of San Diego. The 31-year-old computer software consultant is doing what he often does on weekends -- looking for someplace new to live. He hates the idea of giving up his bougainvillea-covered bungalow, with its postage stamp-size patio, one block from the beach in La Jolla, Calif. But three years after he moved in, the neighborhood is not what it once was.

The couple next door have had a baby, and with the lots so close together, Gill -- who describes himself as passionately, even militantly, "child free" -- can hear every wail and whimper. The family on the other side has a baby girl and two young sons who used to peer at Gill through the grape-stake fence until he replaced it with a solid redwood one. Now the boys use that fence as a soccer goal, often while Gill is trying to read a book or have a quiet glass of wine.

The teenagers down the block have formed a rock band. The nice elderly woman across the street and the retired empty nesters a few doors away have sold their homes to new owners who are building Mediterranean-esque overstatements where modest cottages used to be. "And here is the lovely sand-beige palace with a turret," Gill said in his most sarcastic faux real estate broker voice while giving me a walking tour of his street. "I don't know who'll move in, but you don't build something this ridiculous unless you have kids."

Countless fences divide the American landscape, and while some, like race, loom large and visible, others are deceptively transparent, subdividing people who are the same except for the choices they have made. Mothers with jobs versus mothers without. Those who own guns versus those who would abolish them. Smokers versus nonsmokers. Home-schoolers versus public-schoolers versus private-schoolers. And, most recently and vociferously, those who have **children** versus those who don't. We believe we can see through these fences; we can even pretend they aren't there. But like mottled glass, they warp and distort, so that what we see from where we stand is not how things look from the other side.

As the mother of two young sons and as a writer on **work-life** issues, here's what I see when I look at the world: parents who are stressed. Workplace policies that try to ease that stress but can go only so far. Airplane attendants who used to be nicer to **children** than they are now. The cost of child care and summer camp and orthodontics, which makes it tough to save for tomorrow's cost of college. Drivers who don't slow down on side streets. Louts who wear obscene T-shirts that my kids can read and curse at baseball games where my kids can hear.

Here's what Jason Gill sees when he looks at that same world: colleagues who are stressed, yes, but only because they choose to have **children**. Employers who expect people like him to **work** longer hours so that employees who are parents can balance their lives. Benefits packages full of maternity leave, pregnancy coverage, dependent health insurance and other benefits that mean parents effectively earn more than nonparents. Infants who cry during R-rated movies. The pharmacist who won't hand over a vial with an easy-to-open cap unless Gill signs a release form swearing that he'll take full responsibility

if the contents kill a child.

He is hardly the only one with that view. "Could you please try and control your brats?" a New York theater critic barks at a mother whose young **children** are rustling and humming during previews of "The Music Man" on Broadway. (It makes all the gossip columns.) "Your Kids Are Driving Me Crazy," blares a headline on a community newspaper on Manhattan's Upper West Side. A sign at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, a city that touts itself as a family destination, warns that **children** under 18 are not allowed in the hotel unless they are paying guests. (Don't even bother to ask room service for a **children's** menu.)

An organization called No Kidding! which schedules social events for those who remain childless, had just 2 chapters five years ago; today it has 47. And there is no way to count the number of "child free" sites online (with names like Brats! and alt.support.childfree.moderated), but together they make up a parallel and expanding universe where the printable names for **children** include "anklebiters" "crib lizards" and "sprogs." In this world, couples in which one parent stays home are called SITCOMS (Single Income, Two **Children**, Oppressive Mortgage). Those enlightened enough not to have **children** are THINKERS (Two Healthy Incomes, No Kids, Early Retirement).

There have always been people with **children** and people without. Why all this anger now? The answer lies in the confluence of nearly every major social and economic trend of the past 30 years. Start with the birth control pill, which transformed parenthood from an assumption to a choice. Add the women's rights movement, which sent women into the workplace in record numbers, forcing employers to find ways to accommodate families, particularly women who become mothers. Mix in the baby boomers (who have produced a baby boomlet of their own) and technology (which allows infertile couples and gay and lesbian couples to have **children**). Then there's the fact that, statistically, parents are older and more affluent, meaning youngsters can now be found everywhere -- at the theater, in upscale restaurants, kicking the back of your airplane seat. The world as we know it can sometimes seem infested with **children**.

Go to **work**, watch the news: the sound of institutions competing to be "family friendly" can be deafening. "Let us create a family lobby as powerful as the gun lobby," Al Gore says, and every issue, from gun control to tax reform, is now presented as being good for **children**. The unintended result of all this is that the 13 million childless baby boomers are left bristling because their lives -- whether chosen or the result of circumstance -- don't seem to count. This simmering resentment might not qualify as a "movement" (a word that is thrown around too often, as if anger does not exist unless it is organized), but it certainly represents a deep divide and a ripe opportunity for sniping between neighbors, between co-workers, between those who have and those who have no interest.

"It angers me and saddens me at the same time that my little piece of paradise is being ruined," says Gill, whose baby face belies an inner daredevil. He passes a truck with such ferocity that I grab the safety handle and do a mental review of my life insurance. He'd never be this reckless, I think -- sounding woefully like a parent -- if he had kids to worry about.

"I live with constant noise, but because it's made by childruuuuun," he says, layering sarcastic emphasis on the final syllable, "I can't even call the cops." (Although he has called the police twice about the rock band down the block.) "What's picturesque to a parent," he adds, "is annoying to someone who's trying to sit on the porch and nap."

We leave the truck in the dust and continue our race along Interstate 5. Farther north, the road leads to Legoland and, eventually, to Disneyland. I know this because I drove that route last summer with my boys. Today, of course, I won't visit either place. What Gill plans to show me is how different the same landscape can look through a different lens, in this case the windshield of a two-seat Miata.

When I first heard the phrase "child free," I rolled my eyes. Here's another politically correct and therefore politically loaded term, I thought, and a combative one at that. It smacks of eradication, like "smoke free" or "pesticide free." Those who use it, however, say it's not about hating **children** (some do; some don't). "Childless" has connotations of loss or regret; "child free" implies satisfaction and

deliberate choice. To be child free, they argue, means giving far more thought to not having **children** than most parents give to having them.

"This wasn't an overnight, let's-really-annoy-the-relatives kind of decision," says Monica Ricci, who is 34 and owns an organizing business in Atlanta. "I remember being in my early 20's and thinking, I don't really want to have kids, but I'm going to have to do it and I'm going to hate it but I'm going to have to do it. Then, slowly, I realized, No, I'm not."

Melody Fohr, 30, who **works** as a telephone operator at a national chain store outside of Pittsburgh, has a similar story. "I knew from an early age that I didn't want to be a mommy," she says. "It just never appealed to me. I was never a kid like the other kids. It took the relatives a long time to realize that I never played with dolls. They kept buying them for me."

I have heard this tale before. In fact, I have lived this tale, to a point. I, too, was a child who had stuffed animals but few dolls and who pretended to be a rock star during playtime, never, ever a mom. I baby-sat -- once. There was a blackout that night, and the **children** cried, and I vowed not to try that again. When my friends began producing newborns, I held them awkwardly, and only when I couldn't find a way out. Four years into my marriage I was still waiting for my maternal urge to kick in, and when it didn't, I closed my eyes and took a leap of faith. Not until my son's first smile did I catch the fever and become a besotted parent.

It might be easy to find a moral here, but those who call themselves child free warn the rest of us to stop assuming that they will somehow see the light. "No one goes up to the goo-goo-eyed mother of a baby and says, 'I'm sure you'll change your mind,'" Gill says. In fact, he would argue that my life is an example of how society pressures people to have **children** against their better judgment. There would be fewer neglected **children**, he says, and fewer stressed and miserable adults, if more people felt free not to reproduce. "This isn't some cute stage that I'll grow out of," he says. "It's a legitimate life choice."

Monica Lightner, a 25-year-old newlywed in California, fought to prove exactly that late last year when she asked a doctor at her H.M.O. to perform a tubal ligation. First he tried to talk her out of it, she says, "insisting that I would change my mind one day." Then she was told that she would have to undergo a psychiatric exam, which she refused, because the suggestion that she was crazy to want a life without **children** was "absurd and insulting." Eventually she was referred to a second doctor, who told her that the last tubal ligation he performed was on a woman who later regretted having it and, as a result, took her life.

Finally, six months after her initial request, she found a doctor willing to do as she asked, and her surgery was done on April 26. She is outraged that she had to fight so hard. "Have you ever heard of a woman being told to take a psychiatric exam before she was permitted to have a baby?" she says. "They kept telling me this was a permanent choice, as if that hadn't occurred to me. Having a child is an even more permanent choice, but no one would have dreamed of talking me out of that."

Pressure also comes from closer to home. Gail G. (who **works** with adoptive parents for a living and asked to remain anonymous because they might resent her decision never to have **children**) began to dread conversations with her mother, who could not believe she would never give her a grandchild. "If I said or did something that made her proud she would sigh and then get this pitiful look and say, 'Too bad you'll never have kids to share this with.' And then when I did or said something she didn't like, she would say, 'Well it's a good thing you're never having kids, you're too selfish.'"

In self-defense, Gail "made a deal with Mom." She set up "appointments" -- every few months -- and declared that these were the only times she would answer questions about being child free. "If she brings it up between appointments," Gail says, "I am justified in hanging up on her or walking out of the room, neither of which I have had to do since we set up the arrangement."

Anne Noble, a graphics artist in New Jersey, has tried in vain to find a similar way to silence her co-workers. One recent lunch hour, tired out by a late-night party (people without **children** get to go to those, she points out), she took a long nap in her car. Returning to the office she was ribbed by

colleagues who had seen her feet jutting out of her rear window. They wondered if she needed the nap because she was pregnant.

"I have made it fairly clear to my office associates that we don't plan on having **children**," she seethes, explaining that the choice was one she reached after a long internal struggle. "I also made a point of telling my friends at **work** that I just started my Depo shots. Yet I still get this question and it just infuriates me. As if there couldn't possibly be any other explanation for an upset stomach, feeling fatigued, whatever. I always answer definitely not, but I really want to say, 'What a rude question.' "

It is the last day of school at Prior Lake High School in suburban Minneapolis, and Elinor Burkett wanders the halls, gossiping with the graduating seniors. "Did you hear Justin didn't show up for detention, so he won't get his diploma?" "Did you hear Roger didn't pass Phys Ed?"

Burkett, 53, has the voice of a serious smoker, and hair that is, by her own description, a most "unnatural" shade of red. The students clearly trust her, and she just as clearly adores them, which is somewhat surprising to me because she is the author of "The Baby Boon: How Family-Friendly America Cheats the Childless," a book that accuses parents of wanting "their child and their Lexus, too" and describes having **children** as "squirting out spawn." (Burkett doesn't actually use that term herself, but approvingly quotes someone who does.)

Burkett's next book will be about a year at Prior Lake, which means she has spent an entire year with teenagers. When I comment on the fact that the "Betty Friedan of the childless" has surrounded herself with **children**, she dismisses it as missing the point. Too many childless people, she says, focus on the wrong things -- the undisciplined toddler at the next table; the insensitive comment by Aunt Marge. "This isn't about hurt feelings," Burkett says. "There are policy implications, financial implications. This is about a political and economic structure which relegates the childless to second-class citizens."

At the top of Burkett's list of targets is the federal tax code, which has long allowed a "dependent deduction" (\$2,800 at the moment, which is worth about \$784 to a family taxed at 28 percent). To that is added a dependent-care credit (up to \$4,800 in expenses for two or more **children**, which is worth about \$960 to that same family) or, if sponsored by an employer, a dependent-care spending account (up to \$5,000, worth \$1,400). Then, in 1997 -- just when political consultants became obsessed with soccer moms" -- Congress added a \$500 per child tax credit.

Burkett is in favor of the deduction for dependent care. "That says that we as a society believe that those people who take care of dependent people -- **children** or adults -- need some help. I don't have a problem with that." Nor would she have had a problem, she says, if Congress had increased that existing deduction by \$500 so that it applied to all dependents. But by creating a tax credit solely for the care of **children**, she explains, "we said implicitly that we think that socially that's more valuable."

How is this different, I ask, from something like a mortgage deduction, in which the tax code is used to shape behavior or reflect social priorities? It isn't, Burkett replies, adding that mortgage deductions are just as arbitrary. "There are renters who are not terribly happy about it, I can tell you that."

Even the tax credits would not infuriate her if they were not part of a definite and very recent trend. During the 106th Congress alone, she says, dozens of bills designed to lighten the tax burden of parents were introduced, including ones that would increase the child tax credit to \$900. ("Who subsidizes that tax break?" she asks. "You're looking at her.") Last month President Clinton opened the door for states to allow new parents to receive unemployment insurance during the weeks they stay home with a newborn. ("So now, in this wonderful world where welfare has allegedly been reformed," she writes, "the poor lose federal benefits if they don't **work**, but doctors and lawyers who don't **work** after they have kids can receive checks from Uncle Sam.")

Most "absurd" of all, she says, is an executive order, signed back in May, prohibiting discrimination against parents in all areas of federal employment. Forget the fact that the White House could not produce a single convincing example of a parent who had actually faced such discrimination, Burkett says. More troubling to her is the fact that the law takes sides.

"If employers are refusing to hire or promote parents because they believe they won't **work** as hard as nonparents, that's unconscionable," she says. "But I also think that if that is illegal, discrimination against nonparents should be illegal as well. Last time I checked, discrimination law generally cut both ways. We don't bar discrimination against women; we bar discrimination on the basis of gender, and so on. So why single out parents? Why not bar discrimination on the basis of family status? Why not make it illegal to presuppose that a nonparent is free to **work** the night shift or presuppose that nonparents are more able to **work** on Christmas than parents?"

Which brings us to the workplace, which promises to be the bloodiest beachhead in the brewing war between parents and nonparents. From where I sit, the increasing insistence by employees that employers accommodate their lives has been a welcome revolution -- and I don't think that "revolution" is too strong a word. Although things like flex time, telecommuting, adoption assistance and emergency day care are hardly ubiquitous, they are at least a part of the national conversation about what workers might need to do their jobs. I am personally grateful for that conversation, because without it I could not **work** the way that I do -- from home, on my own schedule, available to my **children** and judged as a worker by what I produce, not by how many hours I log in the office.

But where I see progress, Burkett sees something else entirely. All these fancy benefits, for instance, like on-site child care, and even the most basic ones, like health insurance for dependents, are examples of perks the childless are not getting. "Parents get more than nonparents," she says. "Every childless person can tell you exactly how much money their compensation package is worth versus the person sitting next to them." She points to Marriott International, which provides approximately \$5,000 per child in the form of subsidized day care at its headquarters in Maryland. "What that means," she says, "is if I worked for Marriott they would be offering fewer benefits that are relevant to my life. All this talk about how you have to have all these benefits to take care of the morale of working parents? What about my morale?"

A more rational approach, she suggests, in a voice that says, "See, I can be reasonable," is a "menu" of benefit options. Every employee would be given a dollar allotment for benefits that they might divide as they choose. A parent might spend most of those dollars on health insurance. A nonparent might choose additional vacation time. At Eastman Kodak, she says approvingly, employees can request "personal opportunity leave." You can take it to bond with your newborn or you can take it to travel. It's unpaid time off, with a guarantee of a job when you return, and it's very unusual for a childless person to take it. But it's an acknowledgment that we're going to treat all of our employees equally, and it's a real morale booster to people without kids.

Eastman Kodak, however, says that its "personal leave of absence" program is not automatically available to all employees. It must be requested and approved. They add that they don't know if childless people are less likely to take the leave, because they don't track this information.

When the conversation shifts to workplace flexibility, Burkett loses her "let's be reasonable" tone. "Every time someone takes off for that sick child or that school conference, then someone else has to pick up the extra **work**," she says. "And the supposition on the part of management almost always is that the person without kids is more able -- and it's true -- to do that than a parent. And it happens again and again and again. After a while you're doing two jobs for one salary."

I am tempted to argue that this doesn't really happen often, and that parents are more likely to ask other parents for help when they're in a bind, on the theory that they would be more likely to understand. But I have spoken to enough child-free workers to know that however often this happens, it is far too often for them. Melody Fohr, the Pittsburgh telephone operator, describes attending night college classes but arriving late because "the pregnant woman who was supposed to take over my shift at 5 was sick for months so she never made it in." Fohr remembers being told, "Well, you have to understand, she's not feeling well."

"I was supposed to worry about their lives, but they couldn't care less about mine," she says. "If I got one personal phone call at **work**, I heard about it from my boss. But nobody says anything to the parent

who's on the phone every 15 minutes to the kid who's home from school."

The unwritten rule at **work** here, Burkett says, is that people with greater needs should receive more, and people with fewer needs should do more, which goes against the doctrine of equal pay for equal **work** and is a step back to the days when married men were paid more than single men because they had families to feed. Childless workers have "had it up to here" with this, she warns, and those childless workers are the one of the fastest growing segments of the **work** force. The childless also make up nearly 10 percent of registered voters, meaning employers and politicians better start to listen.

Already there are signs that the "child free" are taking a page from Burkett, who has become a cult figure in these circles. "The book put hard numbers to my feeling of being ignored by politicians and my vague sense of being ripped off in general," Jason Gill says. "I've gotten more politicized," he adds. "I used to keep my mouth shut to be polite, but now I'm more willing to tell people what I think."

What he thinks about a friend who was looking for a job but not mentioning that she was pregnant is this: "I told her husband she was committing employment fraud," he says. Never mind that the law says her pregnancy is not the employer's business, and that to hold it against her would be discrimination. Gill believes that the law is wrong. "She'll get the job, they'll spend money to train her," he predicts. "Whenever she has a doctor's appointment, and especially when she goes on maternity leave, someone else will have to fill in. Then she'll take months off and probably never come back."

And what he thinks about a recent family-friendly policy developed by his former employer is equally blunt. "They announced this 'great new employee benefit,'" he says, "several thousands of dollars in tuition money for the **children** of employees." Last he'd checked, Murphy, his 11-year-old spaniel-collie, wasn't interested in going to college, so instead of keeping his mouth shut, Gill wrote an e-mail message to the company's C.E.O.

"What about employees who want to go back to school to better themselves?" he asked. Within two months the tuition funds were made available to employees as well as their **children**. But Gill left the company shortly thereafter to become an independent consultant, in part so that he wouldn't "have to do all the **work** when all the parents left for middle school graduation."

How do you find a neighborhood that is not "infested" with **children**? Gill still has 20-odd years to go before he qualifies for the only type of real estate development -- those communities substantially filled by residents 55 and older -- that are legally allowed to bar **children**. None of the standard home-buying guides cover his problem, either, and real estate agents look either confused or aghast when he explains what he needs. "If there was someplace that said, 'You have to pay double rent but no one under 18 is allowed,'" he says, "I'd be lining up."

But there is no such place, so Gill is doing the detective **work** on his own. He thinks he sees clues in the real estate ads -- developers who present silver-haired models alone on a beach at dusk are hinting that **children** are not wanted, he thinks, while those who hold open houses featuring petting zoos and clowns are telling him to look elsewhere. He has posted the question online ("What are some good strategies for finding Minimum Breeder Quotient neighborhoods?" were his exact words. "What can I do to minimize the likelihood of landing in a noisy, sprog-ridden neighborhood?")

Some of the answers were sarcastic (I hope). "Tell the real estate agent that your brother visits you quite often and it's a condition of his parole that he not be within one block of **children** under 12," was one reply. Others were practical, from members who had searched, mostly in vain, for their own quiet places over the years. "Avoid homes in great school districts like the plague!" or "Live on a main road. Lots of mooomies and daddies avoid places where, if their kids play in traffic, they're road kill."

He was advised to look in "gay neighborhoods," which he would do, except that he is a surfer, and in San Diego those areas are not close enough to the beach. It was suggested that he look for neighborhoods with small yards, where **children** can't play, but he points out that he lives on a block with tiny yards and all that seems to mean is that **children** feel free to play hide-and-seek in his. He has also been told by his online pals to look for larger yards ("Lots o' land, modest houses + no trendy

'McMansions' with very spoiled sproggen") and for slightly worn, scruffy neighborhoods ("Seems most breeder-yuppie-scum are drawn to the new subdivisions").

Those last two reasons are why we are spending the afternoon in the town of Leucadia, about 25 miles north of San Diego. "It has a funkier, surf-town sort of feel," he says, "with piercing parlors here and there, and it's close to where the farm workers live, so maybe that will give pause to people with **children**." But as we start to cruise the side streets, eyes peeled for For Sale signs, Gill is disappointed. There are chalk drawings in front of one house. A blue swing set and a little blue pool in front of another. Like a scene in a David Lynch movie, the symbols of suburbia take on a threatening vibe.

Eventually we spot an Open House -- three bedrooms, two baths, 2,790 square feet. It is a sprawling home, on property that seems to go on forever. There's no family room, I notice, and no safety cover on the pool. The master bedroom shares a bathroom with what I call a second bedroom and Gill calls an office.

Standing by the open-brick barbecue pit I mutter, "**Children** with third-degree burns."

Standing by that same pit, Gill says, "What a cool place for a party." Despite the fact that, at \$835,000, the house is more than \$200,000 out of his price range, he adds, "I have to bring Dorothea here."

Dorothea Ragsdale is Gill's girlfriend of five years, and it is with her that his "child free" identity officially began. Gill was married, briefly, when he was 21, to a woman with two young boys whom he describes as "the spawn of the devil." When he met Ragsdale, though, he still assumed he would marry again and have **children**. But she was 15 years his senior and had already reared her **children**, who are now 23 and 25. Instead of ending the relationship over the question of **children**, as Ragsdale feared he would, Gill found himself relieved that he did not have to become a parent after all. Finding others online who felt the way he did was "liberating," he says. "I felt like a gay person must feel, coming out of the closet and having these people validating me."

Ragsdale, who is divorced, admits that if she could make the decision all over again, she probably would not have **children**. As a manager at an e-commerce company, she chafes at the expectation of today's parents that they can have it all. "There were positions I couldn't take when I was raising my **children**, and I sacrificed because of them," she says. "I made these hard choices, and now they're saying that other people don't have to make them. I find that insulting."

Still, the fact that she is a parent means she can never see the world exactly as he does, and when he rants about **children**, she has to remember "not to personally internalize that he's talking about mine." He, in turn, censors himself around her, saving the worst of his rants for the computer.

I suspect he is censoring himself around me too. I know I am censoring myself around him. Just as I didn't realize how often I ate carbohydrates until a nutritionist told me not to, I had no idea how often I talked about my boys until I tried to stop. They are, I admit, one of my favorite subjects, not only when chatting with friends, but also professionally; I think nothing of swapping "cute kid" stories during interviews.

But then I spent weeks interviewing childless people, and hearing how sick they've become of parents who chatter endlessly about their **children**. In fact, escape from that kind of talk was one reason Jerry Steinberg, a Canadian schoolteacher, became "founding nonfather" of the group No Kidding! in the first place. "Conversations with my child-burdened friends became monologues," he says. "I'd say, 'How's it going?' and they'd bombard me with information about the kids."

So when Gill and I talk about surfing, I don't mention that my first grader would love to learn; and when he, Ragsdale and I go out to dinner, I keep the story about my fourth grader's first taste of calamari to myself. I give everybody my cell phone number, so that my **children** won't answer the phone when they call. And I specifically arrange to interview Jerry Steinberg when the boys are out of the house. During that interview, he complains about how often he's subjected to the background noise of **children** during business calls. "They make it impossible to have a thoughtful, quiet conversation like this," he says, and

I bite my tongue.

As Jason Gill well knows, the "child free" do not live in a world by themselves, and on a recent Monday those on the other side of the fence gather to make their presence known. In a wood-paneled club off Fifth Avenue, dozens of parents and their defenders nibble canapes and sip sparkling water. Their host is the National Parenting Association, whose goal is "laying the groundwork to spark and sustain a social movement" of, by and for parents. The meet-and-greet portion of the event is short -- there are baby sitters waiting at home -- and when the time comes for speeches, each participant is introduced in a way that would make Elinor Burkett cringe.

Lesley Stahl, one scheduled speaker, is described not only as an award-winning CBS News reporter but also as a mother who managed to "balance **work** and parenting." Stahl, in turn, introduces Ruth Wooden, the former president of the Advertising Council and current president of the parenting association, as "the mother of John." Then Wooden proceeds to introduce Sylvia Ann Hewlett, the Harvard-educated economist who founded the National Parenting Association, as "the tireless mother of four."

"There are 63 million parents" -- of **children** under 18 -- in the United States," says Hewlett, getting down to the evening's business, "and if they were to vote as a bloc they could swing the election."

Hewlett is the co-author (with Cornel West) of "The War Against Parents," and from her side of the looking glass parents are anything but pampered and powerful. To the contrary, she describes them as "demoralized," the victims of "a culture of parent-bashing in this country." Everywhere parents turn, she says, they are told they are doing a bad job -- simultaneously ignoring and spoiling their **children** so that they grow into obese adolescents whose reading and math scores are low and who are likely to blow up the school cafeteria.

Nothing represents this backlash better than what she calls that "contemptible" book. "Baby Boon" (which mentions Hewlett numerous of times, none of them complimentary) "is making my blood boil," she says in an interview in the association's offices, which are located on the ground floor of a brownstone on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Hewlett is recovering from walking pneumonia. She has been up most of the night caring for her 3-year-old daughter and helping her 16-year-old son study for a biology exam. (At 54, she also has a 19-year-old, a 22-year-old and a 28-year-old stepdaughter.) But you would never know this to look at her. She is elegantly dressed and perfectly manicured, even as she describes how outraged she is.

"This is pernicious, it's brand-new, it's gaining traction," she bristles, as she proceeds to take "Baby Boon" apart fact by fact. Yes, there is a new per-child tax credit, she says, ticking her objections off on her fingers, but that paltry \$500 hardly "redistributes the nation's wealth to those with **children**," as Burkett claims. "The fact is that our tax code has tilted in favor of those without **children**," she counters, and because the standard dependent deduction has decreased as a percentage of income, parents are getting far less help from the government than they did a generation ago.

"That deduction," she fumes, "is one of the things she harps on because it's one of the few things you can hang your hat on because it's one of the few things parents do get." But look at the cost side of the balance sheet, she says. She points out that a two-parent household with an income of up to \$62,000 a year will spend about \$160,000 to feed, clothe and shelter a child until the age of 18. "And this figure doesn't even include college tuition," she adds. It also doesn't include income lost by women who have **children**. Quoting data from a 1998 study, Hewlett says that childless women now earn 90 percent of what their male counterparts earn, while mothers earn only 73 percent.

"In the face of those numbers," Hewlett says, "Uncle Sam actually does very little." (Or, as James Weikart, of Weikart Tax Associates, scoffed when I asked whether parents reaped unfair gains from the tax code, "Kids are a very poor tax shelter.")

Burkett's contention that benefits packages and family-friendly policies are de facto bonuses for parents also rankles Hewlett. How many working parents, she asks, actually receive such benefits?

According to a 1998 study by the Families and **Work** Institute, 46.8 percent of companies with 100 or more employees offer a family-friendly package that includes flex time, paid parental leave and child-care assistance. But, Hewlett points out, "We must remember that the majority of women **work** for firms smaller than this, and these firms typically offer much less."

Lisa Benenson, the editor in chief of Working Mother magazine, agrees: "The vast majority of people in this country do not have flex time, do not get to go home early." As for benefits packages, she says, childless workers are not alone in not using all available benefits. "Do you deny someone a benefit just because you can't take advantage of that benefit? Do you deny someone mental health coverage because you don't need mental health coverage? If the person at the desk next to you gets cancer, do you think of them as 'earning' more because their health dollar costs are higher?"

The limited benefits that parents do receive in the workplace, Benenson says, are a reflection of their worth as employees -- in other words, their economic clout. "Companies don't do this out of the goodness of their hearts," she points out. "This is what they need to do to keep good workers. This is economics, pure and simple." The same economic laws are why **children** are allowed to swarm freely at any Starbucks and why even the most upscale restaurants have a supply of polished teak high chairs. "The trend in travel now is 'bring your kids,'" says Kim Clay, corporate communications manager for Omni Hotels. "And we want to make our customers happy." To that end, the upscale chain welcomes **children** with a goody bag of games and candy at check-in.

This status quo, the one Burkett and Gill see as oppressive, is only a rough draft of what Hewlett and Benenson think the world should be. Look at France, they say, where new mothers are guaranteed 16 to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, or Ireland, where **children** are welcomed everywhere (including the family-friendly local pub). If parents are to get all they deserve, Hewlett argues, they must flex their political muscles as well as their economic ones.

The language of politics over the past four years hints that this is happening. Gun control used to be about reducing crime; now it is about protecting **children** and about mothers marching on Washington. The fight against smoking used to be about lung cancer; now it is about Joe Camel's influence on youngsters. "It's absolutely exploitative and disgusting," Gill says. "Even if I agreed with gun control it would turn me off because it's all about kids. Things like car safety, food safety -- it's O.K. if I die or get sick, because I'm over 21, but to keep a kid from getting hurt we have to change the whole world?"

Hewlett, not surprisingly, sees progress where Gill sees pandering. Framing policies in terms of **children**, she says, is the only way to challenge the belief at the core of the "child free" worldview -- that caring for **children** is in no way an obligation of the childless. The dismissal of parenting as a "choice" and the concomitant belief that only parents are responsible for the stress, the cost and the complications of that choice is "outrageous," Hewlett says. "This assumes that having a child is the moral equivalent of buying a boat or getting a manicure," she says. "True, not having **children** is an option for each individual. In some cases it is an honorable choice. But childlessness is not a choice for society."

In other words, if no one had **children**, there would be no more society. Nonparents have heard that before, and point out that overpopulation is a bigger problem than underpopulation, and that parents rarely decide to be parents out of a perceived obligation to humankind. Parents have **children**, nonparents say, because they are selfish -- because they want a baby to coo over, or a genetic link to the future, or the family of their own childhood dreams.

In fact, this whole debate can be distilled down to the word "selfish," and Ruth Wooden, president of the National Parenting Association, throws it right back at the child free. Parenting, she says, means "realizing that someone else's needs are more important than your own." In that way, she argues, becoming a parent means becoming "a grown-up," and as the percentage of childless adults increases, the result is a society that is "not as mature."

"It's untrammelled individualism," Hewlett says. "It's all about 'I want what's good for me and to hell

with the other guy.' "

The most sweeping societal clashes, are, at their core, deeply personal -- an accumulation of moments between people who didn't realize they were making assumptions until they collided with others who assumed something else. My moment came during lunch with my **children** a few weeks ago, at a white-tablecloth restaurant near the river on the edge of our town. It's not the sort of place I would usually take young boys, but we were celebrating the last day of school, and because there's a village playground on the restaurant grounds, I wagered that the staff had seen its share of kids.

My sons behaved beautifully. When it came time to order dessert, I didn't want to break the peaceful mood, so I tried to tell the waitress, in a kind of cryptic parent-speak, that we would take the Valrhona Chocolate Mousse Cake Served With Vanilla Ice Cream and Caramel Sauce in the form of a piece of chocolate cake for one child and a separate dish of ice cream for the other. In other words, I wanted them to share, but I didn't want them to know they were sharing.

The waitress, I soon realized, was not conversant in parent-speak. She brought two full desserts. Then we each waved the banners of our respective armies as I tried to explain -- patiently, then less so -- what I had meant to order.

"I don't have **children**," she finally snapped. As she turned to leave she added, "And thank God that I don't."

Watching my boys devour their sweets, I blamed myself. I imagined (as best I could) what the waitress probably saw when we arrived: a table that would demand extra plates, spill lots of drinks and leave a lousy tip. I tried to see what Jason Gill would have seen had he witnessed the exchange: an entitled parent assuming the world would understand that her precious **children** can't possibly be expected to share. And, I wondered, What would I have thought, in the years before I had **children**, if I had seen the same little scene? It's a question I've been asking myself a lot of late, and the answer is: I was a different person then. There is nothing so transforming as becoming a parent, and that fact right there is the root of this entire divide.

I understand Burkett's point. And where compromise is possible, it should be the goal. It makes sense to me, for example, to increase the dependent deduction rather than add a per-child tax credit, and I'd agree that employers should aim for a menu of benefit options, one in which "family" does not automatically mean "**children**."

I also sympathize with the more "social" objections. Monica Lightner should be entitled to choose a tubal ligation, Anne Noble's life plan should be accepted by her co-workers, and no one should have to tolerate rude, intrusive questions from colleagues or relatives. Life without **children** should be respected as a legitimate, full, admirable life, not a consolation prize or an insult to those who are parents. **Children** should not be allowed to play soccer outside anyone's window at dawn. I would even concede that they might not belong at the fanciest restaurant in town either.

But on some parts of this stand-off there is no compromise. Parents will have to leave **work** early more often than nonparents, and they will need someone to cover for them while they're gone. Parents might not be able to control their **children's** noise level in the supermarket, or even in the library either, because acting out is what even the best-behaved **children** often do.

"If I were a working mother like you," Elinor Burkett told me, "I would be demanding all these things, too." And if I had never had **children**, I answered, I might have written her book. But I did have **children**, and on these less-black-and-white questions I can't help seeing the world from this side of the fence.

My answer to those who think my life intrudes on theirs is simple: Every person with **children** was once a person without **children**, so you have to take our word when we say we can't do it without help and without spilling over into your space all too regularly. The life of any given parent is more complicated, stressful and expensive than the life of that same person would be if he or she were not a parent. Feel

sorry for us if you'd like. Avoid us if you need to. And, in several decades, when the **children** are grown, we can all live side by side again, in child-free retirement homes.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

GRAPHIC: Photos (Jake Chessum)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 23, 2000

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE WHITE HOUSE CHILD CARE INITIATIVE WAS PROPOSED IN JANUARY 1998

Goal:

Double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than 2 million by the year 2003

Achievement:

Expect to receive President's full budget request of \$2 billion in FY 2001. If Congress does indeed appropriate the President's request, the program will be able to serve 2.2 million children in 2001 combined with child care funds in welfare reform.

Goal:

Provide after-school for up to half a million children per year by expanding the 21st Century Community program by \$800 million over 5 years.

Achievement:

This year the 21st Century Community Learning program received \$453 million and is serving 850,000 children. The President has requested \$1 billion for FY 01, which will help communities to serve 2.5 million – far exceeding the goal of .5 million per year.

Goal:

Improve coordination of existing Federal after-school efforts so that communities can access existing resources.

Achievement:

An Interagency tasked force was formed and created afterschool.gov as an information resources for communities on after-school funds and best practices. It has been continually recognized as on the government's best websites and greatest resources on afterschool.

Goal:

Invest in research on child care.

Achievement:

The 2000 budget included \$10 million for research as part of the Child Care Development Block Grant and \$10 million more has been requested by the President for FY 2001.

Goal:

Establish a national child care hotline so that parents can call to get information about how to find child care in their communities.

Achievement:

The Department of Health and Human Services established such a hotline that is being regularly used by parents.

up to - for the research it, must be, upon
appropriated
- Childcare reform -

Goal:

Increase investment in Head Start to reach one million children by 2002.

Achievement:

The Administration is on track to meet this goal. This year, Head Start is serving 835,000 children and if the President's budget request of an additional \$1 billion is approved for FY 2001, Head Start will be able to serve 950,000 children in 2001. This Administration has nearly doubled the funding for Head Start.

PROPOSALS STILL UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

Goal:

Increase child care tax credits.

Still Pending:

The President continues to call for the expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and a tax credit for businesses that provide child care services to their employees. These tax cuts are part of the President's overall tax package that is still under consideration.

Goal:

Improve the quality of child care by establishing an Early Learning Fund.

Still Pending:

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Stevens, Kennedy, and Jeffords – the "Early Learning Opportunities Act." It was most recently considered as an amendment to the pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 7, 1998

PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES CHILD CARE INITIATIVE

January 7, 1998

President Clinton today announced an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The President's FY 1999 budget will include approximately \$20 billion over five years for child care, the largest single investment in child care in the nation's history. President Clinton's initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care that they can afford, trust, and rely on. The President's proposal will help working families pay for child care, build the supply of good after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.

THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE:

Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than two million by the year 2003, by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.

Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care by investing \$5.2 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.

Provides after-school care for up to half a million children per year by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.

Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

See attached fact sheets for details on the President's Initiative.

Child Care Block Grant Increase	\$7.5 billion over five years
Child and Dependent Tax Credit Reform	\$5.2 billion over five years
Tax Credit for Businesses	\$500 million over five years
After-School Program	\$800 million over five years
Early Learning Fund	\$3 billion over five years
Head Start Increase	\$3.8 billion over five years
Standards Enforcement Fund	\$500 million over five years
Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund	\$250 million over five years
Research and Evaluation Fund	\$150 million over five years

TOTAL: \$21.7 billion over five years

Makes Child Care More Affordable for Working Families

✓ Doubles the Number of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies to More than Two Million. The President proposes to expand the Child Care and Development Block Grant to help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care. This block grant is the primary federal subsidy program to pay for child care, enabling low-income parents to work. Funds are distributed by formula to the states to operate direct child care subsidy programs, as well as to improve the quality and availability of care. The President's initiative will more than double the number of children served, from the one million served in FY 95 (the latest year for which data are available) to more than two million. The President's budget will increase funding for the block grant by \$7.5 billion (with a match) over five years, which will enable states to provide subsidies for more than two million children by 2003.

Expect to receive President's full budget request of \$2 billion in FY '01 - Combined with child care funds in welfare reform, the program will be able to serve 2.2 million children in 2001

on table still pending Increases Tax Credits for Child Care for Three Million Working Families. The Child and Dependent Tax Credit provides tax relief to taxpayers who pay for the care of a child under 13 or a disabled dependent or spouse in order to work. The credit is equal to a percentage of the taxpayer's employment-related expenditures for child or dependent care, with the amount of the credit depending on the taxpayer's income. The President's proposal increases the credit for families earning under \$60,000. It provides an additional average tax cut of \$358 for these families, and it eliminates income tax liability for almost all families with incomes below 200% of poverty (\$35,000 for a family of four) that take the maximum allowable child care expenses under the law. The President's budget will include \$5.2 billion over five years to expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit for three million working families.

on table pending Provides New Business Tax Credits. The child care initiative includes a tax credit to businesses that provide child care services for their employees, by building or expanding child care facilities, operating existing facilities, training child care workers, reserving slots for employees at child care facilities, or providing child care resource and referral services to employees. The credit covers 25% of qualified costs, but may not exceed \$150,000 per year. The President's budget will include approximately \$500 million over five years for these tax credits.

Promotes Early Learning and Healthy Child Development

Promotes Early Learning. Research shows that children's experiences in the earliest years are critical to their development and future success. The President's proposed Early Learning Fund provides challenge grants to communities (distributed by states) to support programs to improve early learning and the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. Funds may be used for the following activities: providing basic training to child care providers (including first aid and CPR); connecting individual child care providers to centers for education and support; assisting child care providers to meet accreditation and licensing requirements; linking child care providers with health professionals; reducing group sizes and child-to-staff ratios; and providing home visits, parent education, and consumer education about child care. The President's Early Learning Fund builds on state initiatives such as North Carolina's Smart Start, which helps North Carolina's children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start funds a broad variety of local efforts, including improving staff-to-child ratios, medical visits that have raised immunization rates, and parent education and mentoring programs to give new parents support. The President's budget will include \$3 billion over five years for this fund.

Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the Senate. Stevens-Kennedy-Jeffords "Early Learning Opportunities Act"

Increases Investment in Head Start and Doubles the Number of Children Served by Early Head Start. Head Start provides early, continuous and comprehensive child development and family support services, preparing children for a lifetime of learning and development. The President is committed to reauthorize Head Start and reach one million children by 2002. The President's budget will invest \$3.8 billion over five years to keep on track his commitment to serving one million children by 2002, and to double the number of infants and toddlers in Early Head Start to 80,000.

on track
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Improves the Quality of Child Care

Steps Up Enforcement of State Health and Safety Standards. Building on the military's model child care program, this proposed initiative will fund state efforts to improve licensing systems and enforce child care health and safety standards, including by increasing unannounced inspections of child care settings. The President's budget will include \$500 million over five years for this program.

Facilitates Background Checks on Child Care Providers. On the day of the White House Conference on Child Care, the President transmitted to Congress the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to sharing criminal history information for non-criminal purposes. Although the vast majority of child care providers are dedicated to the teaching and nurturing of children, one tragedy in child care is too many. Background checks are an important way to ensure that the people watching our children are fit for this responsibility.

Increases Scholarships and Training for Child Care Providers. At the White House Conference on Child Care, the President proposed establishing a Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund to enable states to provide scholarship funds to students working toward a child care credential. Eligible child care workers must commit to remaining in the field for at least one year for each year of assistance received and will earn increased compensation or bonuses when they complete their course work. The President proposed a federal investment of \$250 million over five years, which will support 50,000 scholarships per year. The President is also proposing to expand the Department of Labor's Child Care Apprenticeship Program to fund the training of child care providers.

Invests in Research. Because too little is known about our child care system, the President's budget will increase support for data, research, and evaluation. This research fund will also support a National Center on Child Care Statistics and a child care hotline that parents can call to get information about how to find child care in their communities and how to identify appropriate, quality care for their children. In addition, the research fund will support demonstration projects to test approaches to help new parents who choose to stay home to care for their newborns or newly adopted children. The President's budget will include \$150 million over five years for this fund.

⇒ \$10 million
in research
through CCDBB
in FY '00
and fighting
for same
in 2001

Expands and Streamlines After-School Care

An estimated five million school-age children spend time as latchkey kids without adult supervision during a typical week. Research indicates that during these unsupervised hours children are

more likely to engage in at-risk behavior, such as crime, drugs, and alcohol use. To meet this pressing demand, the President is proposing a dramatic expansion of after-school care.

✓ Provides After-School Care for up to Half a Million Children a Year. The President proposes a dramatic expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program to provide start-up funds (with a local match) to school-community partnerships to establish or expand before- and after-school programs for school-age children. The program increases the supply of after-school care in a cost-effective manner primarily by funding programs that use public schools and their existing resources, such as computers, gymnasiums, and sports equipment. The program also includes a set aside to fund programs run by community organizations. The President's budget will request \$800 million of entirely new money for this program, for a total of \$1 billion over five years.

\$453 million
in FY00
Serving
850,000 children
proposed \$1 billion
for FY01
to serve
2.5 million

✓ Improves Coordination of Federal After-School Initiatives to Help Communities Make Best Use of Existing Resources. The President will put in place a collaborative effort involving numerous federal agencies to eliminate duplication and better coordinate federal funding for after-school programs in three to five pilot cities, including the District of Columbia.

Yes. This Interagency after-school.gov - continually recognized as
group created after-school.gov. One of the governments best websites and
greatest resource on after-school

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE WHITE HOUSE CHILD CARE INITIATIVE WAS PROPOSED IN JANUARY 1998

Goal:

Double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than 2 million by the year 2003

Achievement:

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Goal:

Provide after-school for up to half a million children per year by expanding the 21st Century Community program by \$800 million over 5 years.

Achievement:

This year the 21st Century Community Learning program received \$453 million and is serving 850,000 children. The President has requested \$1 billion for FY 01, which will help communities to serve 2.5 million – far exceeding the goal of .5 million per year.

Goal:

Improve coordination of existing Federal after-school efforts so that communities can access existing resources.

Achievement:

An Interagency tasked force was formed and created afterschool.gov as an information resources for communities on after-school funds and best practices. It has been continually recognized as on the government's best websites and greatest resources on afterschool.

Goal:

Invest in research on child care.

Achievement:

The 2000 budget included \$10 million for research as part of the Child Care Development Block Grant and \$10 million more has been requested by the President for FY 2001.

Goal:

Establish a national child care hotline so that parents can call to get information about how to find child care in their communities.

Achievement:

The Department of Health and Human Services established such a hotline that is being regularly used by parents.

PROPOSALS STILL UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

Goal:

Increase child care tax credits.

Still Pending:

The President continues to call for the expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit and a tax credit for businesses that provide child care services to their employees. These tax cuts are part of the President's overall tax package that is still under consideration.

Goal:

Improve the quality of child care by establishing an Early Learning Fund.

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Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Stevens, Kennedy, and Jeffords – the “Early Learning Opportunities Act.” It was most recently considered as an amendment to the pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

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January 7, 1998

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- **Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies** to more than two million by the year 2003 by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.
- **Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care** by investing \$5.2 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.
- **Provides after-school care for up to half a million children per year** by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.
- **Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development** by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

Child Care Block Grant Increase	\$7.5 billion over five years
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TOTAL:	\$21.7 billion over five years

MAKES CHILD CARE MORE AFFORDABLE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Doubles the Number of Children Receiving Child Care Subsidies to More than Two Million. The President proposes to expand the Child Care and Development Block Grant to help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care. This block grant is the primary federal subsidy program to pay for child care, enabling low-income parents to work. Funds are distributed by formula to the states to operate direct child care subsidy programs, as well as to improve the quality and availability of care. The President's initiative will more than double the number of children served from the one million served in FY 95 (the latest year for which data are available). The President's budget will increase funding for the block grant by \$7.5 billion (with a match) over five years, which will enable states to provide subsidies for more than two million children by 2003.

Increases Tax Credits for Child Care for Three Million Working Families. The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit provides tax relief to taxpayers who pay for the care of a child under 13 or a disabled dependent or spouse in order to work. The credit is equal to a percentage of the taxpayer's employment-related expenditures for child or dependent care, with the amount of the credit depending on the taxpayer's income. The President's proposal increases the credit for families earning under \$60,000, providing an additional average tax cut of \$358 for these families and eliminating income tax liability for almost all families with incomes below 200% of poverty (\$35,000 for a family of four) that take the maximum allowable child care expenses under the law. The President's budget will include \$5.2 billion over five years to expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit for three million working families.

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PROMOTES EARLY LEARNING AND HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Promotes Early Learning. Research shows that children's experiences in the earliest years are critical to their development and future success. The President's proposed Early Learning Fund provides challenge grants to communities (distributed by states) to support programs to improve early learning and the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. Funds may be used for the following activities: providing basic training to child care providers (including first aid and CPR); connecting individual child care providers to centers for education and support; assisting child care providers to meet accreditation and licensing requirements; linking child care providers with health professionals; reducing group sizes and child-to-staff ratios; and providing home visits, parent education, and consumer education about child care. The President's Early Learning Fund builds on state initiatives such as North

Carolina's Smart Start, which helps North Carolina's children enter school healthy and ready to succeed. Smart Start funds a broad variety of local efforts, including improving staff-to-child ratios, health linkages that have raised immunization rates, and parent education and mentoring programs to give new parents support. The President's budget will include \$3 billion over five years for this fund.

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IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE

Steps Up Enforcement of State Health and Safety Standards. Building on the military's model child care program, this proposed initiative will fund state efforts to improve licensing systems and enforce child care health and safety standards, including by increasing unannounced inspections of child care settings. The President's budget will include \$500 million over five years for this program.

Facilitates Background Checks on Child Care Providers. On the day of the White House Conference on Child Care, the President transmitted to Congress the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, which will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to sharing criminal history information for non-criminal purposes. Although the vast majority of child care providers are dedicated to the teaching and nurturing of children, one tragedy in child care is too many. Background checks are an important way to ensure that the people watching our children are fit for this responsibility.

Increases Scholarships and Training for Child Care Providers. At the White House Conference on Child Care, the President proposed establishing a Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund to enable states to provide scholarship funds to students working toward a child care credential. Eligible child care workers must commit to remaining in the field for at least one year for each year of assistance received and will earn increased compensation or bonuses when they complete their course work. The President proposed a federal investment of \$250 million over five years, which will support 50,000 scholarships per year. The President is also proposing to expand the Department of Labor's Child Care Apprenticeship Program to fund the training of child care providers.

Invests in Research. Because too little is known about our child care system, the President's budget will increase support for data, research, and evaluation. This research fund will also support a National Center on Child Care Statistics and a child care hotline that parents can call to get information about how to find child care in their communities and how to identify appropriate, quality care for their children. In addition, the research fund will support

demonstration projects to test approaches to help new parents who choose to stay home to care for their newborns or newly adopted children. The President's budget will include \$150 million over five years for this fund.

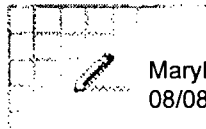
EXPANDS AND STREAMLINES AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

An estimated five million school-age children spend time as "latchkey kids" without adult supervision during a typical week. Research indicates that during these unsupervised hours children are more likely to engage in at-risk behavior, such as crime, drugs, and alcohol use. To meet this pressing demand, the President is proposing a dramatic expansion of after-school care.

Provides After-School Care for up to Half a Million Children a Year. The President proposes a dramatic expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program to provide start-up funds (with a local match) to school-community partnerships to establish or expand before- and after-school programs for school-age children. The program increases the supply of after-school care in a cost-effective manner primarily by funding programs that use public schools and their existing resources, such as computers, gymnasiums, and sports equipment. The program also includes a set aside to fund programs run by community organizations. The President's budget will request \$800 million of entirely new money for this program, for a total of \$1 billion over five years.

Improves Coordination of Federal After-School Initiatives to Help Communities Make Best Use of Existing Resources. The President will put in place a collaborative effort involving numerous federal agencies to eliminate duplication and better coordinate federal funding for after-school programs in three to five pilot cities, including the District of Columbia.

For your talk w/ Ann



MaryEllen C. McGuire
08/08/2000 05:20:02 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Ruby Shamir/WHO/EOP@EOP
cc: MaryEllen C. McGuire/WHO/EOP@EOP
Subject: briefing book schedule

MaryEllen will do books for:

Wednesday, August 9th
Saturday, August 12th - CONVENTION
Sunday, August 13th- CONVENTION
Monday, August 14th- CONVENTION
Tuesday, August 15th- CONVENTION
Monday, August 21st- CONVENTION

GAPS/ NEEDS(because I'll be out of town):

Thursday, August 10th - *Book 9th*
Friday, August 11th - *(Book 10th*
Wednesday, August 16th ?
Thursday, August 17th ?
Friday, August 18th
Saturday, August 19th
Sunday, August 20th

NEW PERSON STARTS August 21st and will do books thereafter - first week with support



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

file: Shalala
Synopsis
memo

JUN 19 2000

DETERMINED TO BE A **CONFIDENTIAL**
ADMINISTRATIVE MARKING

INITIALS: kel DATE: 04/10/13

2013-0436-5

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FIRST LADY

Together, you and the President have achieved an unprecedented investment in child care. I recommend a continuation of this investment, using \$27 billion of the growing budget surplus toward child care affordability and quality. These entitlement funds would build on our existing budget request of an increase of \$817 million in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, for a total of \$2 billion in discretionary funding for FY2001. The increase we included in the President's Budget was critical, but given the size of the gap we must fill, this step is only a beginning. Therefore, I recommend an additional investment of \$17 billion in mandatory child care dollars over ten years in the child care matching funds to States and \$10 billion dollars to build on our proposed Early Learning Fund.

As you can see by the attached chart and figure, a \$17 billion increase over ten years will allow us to reach an additional one million children by 2005 and maintain this level through the end of the decade. This additional funding would allow us to provide child care assistance to over 20 percent of the eligible children. Reaching more of this unmet need is critical: in 1998, Federal funds covered only 10 percent of eligible children.

In addition, I recommend a bold approach to make a major investment in the school readiness of America's children. A \$10 billion increase in the Early Learning Fund would support large improvements in school readiness in communities across the country. This investment would build on the proposal that we have already developed together for an Early Learning Fund (currently in the President's budget at an amount of \$3 billion over five years) and such an investment could support improvements that really make a difference in school readiness -- staff training; higher standards; and safe, modern facilities.

Child care offers us the extraordinary opportunity to invest at the same time in America's economy, in the stability and advancement of America's working families, and in the well being and educational success of America's children. There is no more important legacy that the Administration could leave.

Donna E. Shalala

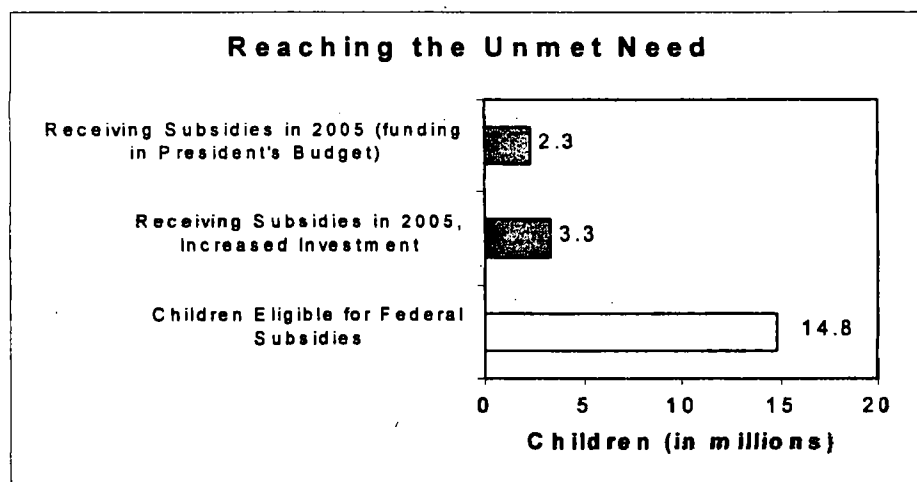
Attachment

cc: Melanne Verveer

Child Care Spending and Children Served

(numbers in millions)

	FY 2001	FY 2005	FY 2010	5 Yr Total	10 Yr Total
Funding in President's FY2001 Budget					
Mandatory	\$2,567	\$2,717	\$2,717	\$13,435	\$27,020
Discretionary	\$2,000	\$2,120	\$2,410	\$10,218	\$21,672
TANF Transfers	\$2,400	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$13,800	\$28,800
President's FY2001 Subsidy Request*	\$6,967	\$7,837	\$8,127	\$37,453	\$77,492
Early Learning Fund*	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$3,000	\$6,000
Children served under FY2001 Request	2.2	2.3	2.3		
Proposed Increased Mandatory Investment					
Increased Mandatory Investment	0	\$2,100	\$2,300	\$5,600	\$16,700
Increased Early Learning Fund	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
New Children with Increased Investment	0	1.0	1.0		



* President's FY2001 Subsidy Request includes current law funding for mandatory, discretionary, and TANF transfers and assumes enactment of \$817 million FY2001 discretionary increase. The \$600 million Early Learning Fund was also included in the FY2001 President's Budget.