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Modern Childcare and the Lack of Study

After doing my interview with Tracy Orr I realized that she has it pretty good when it comes to child care. Not only does she not have to worry about it but her children are helpful on their farm. What an asset this must be. Her children help her and her husband on the farm and they get good quality child care out of it. I also realize that this is the situation of my own mother as she was growing up. She could help my granddad make hay if she needed child care. This was extremely influential in her upbringing and gave her a very strong bond with her parents that still exists today. It leaves me wondering how does the usual parent get to interact with their child? Is it a nurturing relationship or is becoming to be more and more of a burden to have a child?

It would seem that there are a number of different circumstances that can befall a parent to keep them from seeing their child. It also seems to be that some parents get to take off with their children and some don't. There are many different variables that change the quality of care. In their article "You Can't Always Get What You Want. Infant Care Preferences and Use among Employed Mothers", Lisa A. Riley and Jennifer L. Glass explain that mothers can not always get what they want in regards to child care. Mothers will sometimes change

their way of thinking to accommodate the needs of their children. Grandparent care may be available but it seems to be used primarily by the lower class and minority families. This is made apparent through “Variations in Child Care by Grandparents during the First Three Years” by Anne S. Johansen, Arleen Leibowitz and Linda J. Waite. They show that Grandparents are not the go to for working middle class mothers as much as would be thought.

The situation of childcare is one that has been changing in the past 50 years. This makes it a hard thing to pin down. There are conflicting opinions on the idea of childcare. People have been writing articles and they are updated the next year by a new study. It is also a very hard thing to gauge considering the fact that every child is different. In this paper I will briefly try to explore the child care scene as it exists today.

The first facet of childcare is the one of institutional care versus the care of close friends or relatives. It would seem that white middle class women tend to leave their children at institutionalized daycare services. Lower class children and minorities seem to go to friends or relatives houses (Lowe 376). This may be because of the lack of money in the lower class households and the strong family ties of most minority groups. It is simply cheaper to leave the kids with grandma if the option is there. This could be another reason that middle class working women do not leave their kids with their grandparents. Middle class women usually have to have gone to college. This would have taken them away

from their parents instead of keeping them in the same town. These middle class families usually then move to a new town after departing the college. By the time a middle class woman has the chance to have kids she is usually too far removed from her parents to keep the kids. Lower classes on the other hand usually stay in the same town their whole lives making it easy to keep family groups together.

There are also more culturally rooted reasons for African Americans and Latin Americans to stay together. Both of those cultures have deep roots in family ties. This is less true in people of northern European descent. This would lead to the families sticking together better and not becoming spread across the country.

The next big facet of childcare in America is that of the effects on children when they go to child care. It stands to reason that there are very big differences in institutional childcare facilities and childcare from the home of a loved one. It used to be the case that Americans assumed that institutional childcare is generally worse but as it turns out there are pros and cons.

As it turns out there are also good effects on children from being in institutional childcare situations. A study done in 1999 suggests that institutional childcare offers the children a better education. Children were found to read and write better and have better social skills from being in this social situation early in life. There were behavioral problems that were more common among young children but these were less noticeable as age progressed.

Children raised at home were more likely to have better manners as they got older. Being at home did not hurt their social skills but they were not those of the children placed in institutionalized daycare facilities.

(NICHD)

In the long run it does not seem to particularly hurt a child one way or the other. Children in childcare facilities will have a markedly different life experience from those taken care of at home. It is not a worse one nor is it a better one it is simply different. Scholars seem to have been looking at these things as good and bad, which is like trying to compare black and white. Things like this with so many variables can not be seen as good and bad but just as different.

This leads to the picking of a style of childcare by the parent. Ultimately it is up to the parent to pick which situation would be best for their child. If they can pay an institution to take care of their child they will generally pay the best one they can get. Parents have been known to see no better alternative and take off from their jobs to take care of their children. This usually comes as a result of not being able to find a better alternative. (Johansen) This is a perfectly acceptable alternative to childcare. The parent needs to be comfortable with the place they are leaving their child in general. There are cases where the parent simply can not leave work and must put their child in a lesser child care facility but they will still want to pick the best possible place for their child. Parents will always want what's best for their kids. It is part of human nature to try to give them the best start in life that you can. Parents

must all find different ways of doing this. All situations are going to be different. That is how life is. There is no gauging what the multitudes will be able to do for their children. There will always be outliers such as that one middle class mom who has her parents close by and wishes to keep her kids in the family. It is really less about what works for the masses and what works for the individual. Sociologists say what can work for the majority of the people and the individual mom freaks out over the findings. Really she should just do what she feels in her gut is best for her child.

I do not stand by sociologists in their love of statistics. People can not be made into statistics. We are all so different in our situations and have so many variables that we can't possibly be measured. It is a helpful and interesting guide but a mom should never lose sleep over what some scientist tells her is best for her child. She already knows the answer to that question.