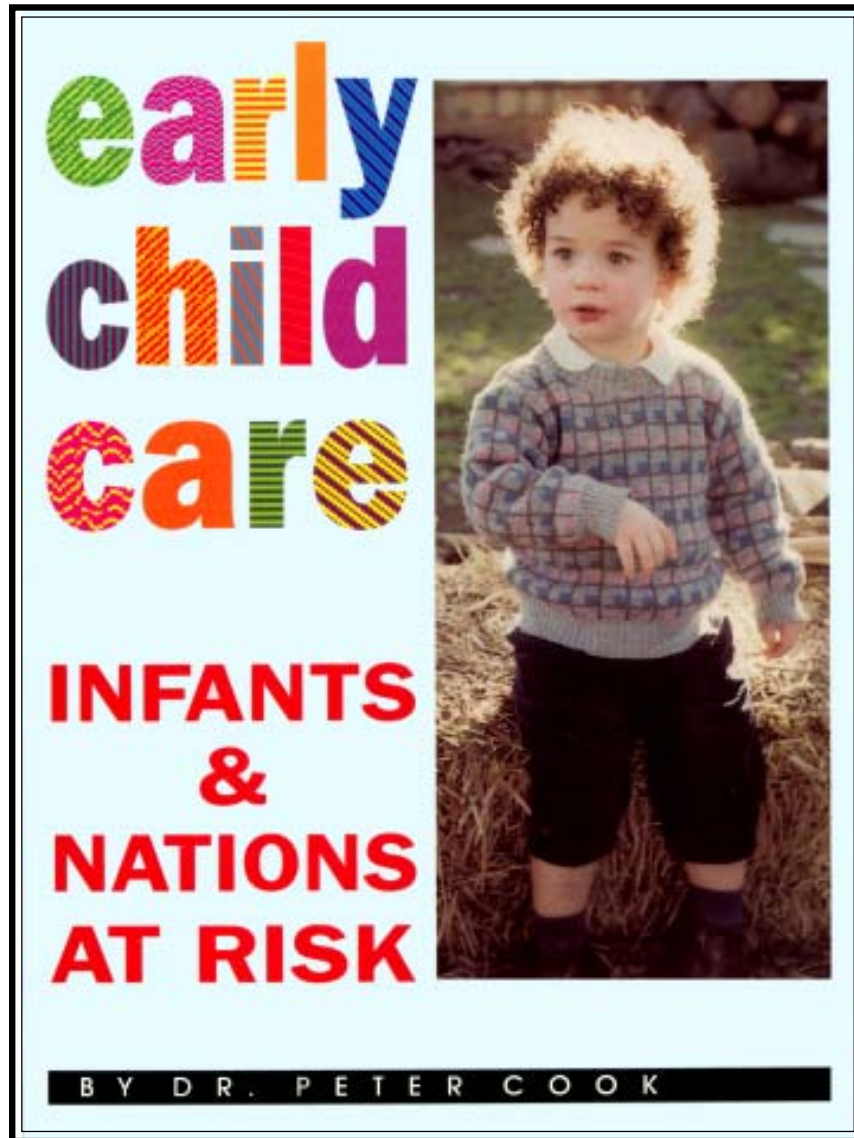


# The Forgotten Sides of Daycare for Under 3's



**The Canadian Society for the Prevention  
of Cruelty to Children**



## There is a Cover-up Going On

I am sorry for mothers who cannot look after their babies themselves, but I do not believe that it is helpful to conceal from them the fact that group-care is a bad alternative. They are entitled to the facts as we understand them and to help in finding alternatives to themselves rather than alternative forms of care. I am sympathetic, too, with mothers who could provide full-time care themselves but do not wish to. But they too are entitled to a true picture of the conflict between what they want and what their children need. Only when they have it can they make informed decisions and, when the decisions take them away from their children, seek 'good enough' solutions.

There is a cover-up going on and it is similar to the cover-up which used to go on over breast-feeding. It has been known for years that breast-milk was not only the best and safest baby-food but also an important protection against a variety of illnesses. But many mothers do not want to breast-feed. In deference to their feelings (and to the social arrangements which bottle-feeding makes possible) people have walked round and round those facts, dropping hints and indications but always building in comforting provisos for the bottle-feeders. With increasingly strong scientific evidence and a change in the climate of opinion, the wraps are at last coming off.

It is now acceptable to state that it would be better if all mothers breast-fed their babies, at least for a few weeks. As a result, the women who already take breast-feeding for granted feel good about doing so; many waverers decide to give it a try and the number of mothers who are actually unable to produce milk drops dramatically.

I believe that a similar brave clarity about individual care would produce similar results...

Penelope Leach



450 infant mental health professionals in 56 countries, who were Members of the World Association for Infant Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, responded to a confidential postal survey sent to 902 listed members.

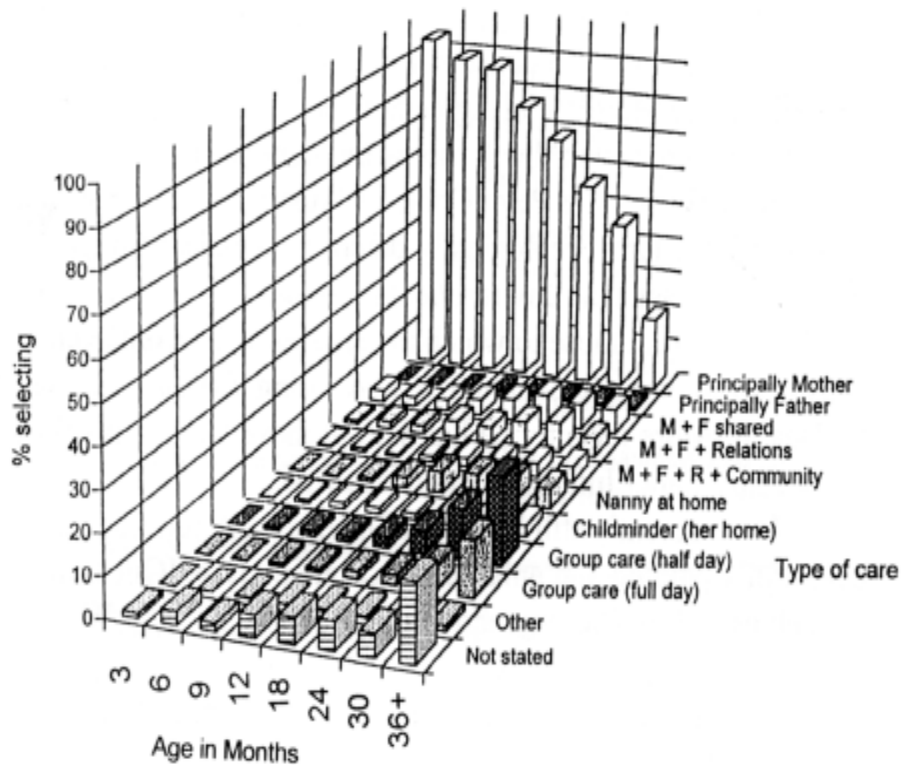
Respondents were asked to indicate anonymously the kinds of care they considered likely to be best for infants from birth to three and a half years, assuming that all kinds of care specified “were of excellent quality by their community’s standards, and equally available and affordable to all”. They were asked to say “on the basis of their experience of normal infants, what kinds of care, in sequence from birth to three and a half years would be likely to be best from the child’s point of view.”

Reporting the results Leach said: “Taking infants’ viewpoint, these respondents do not think more day care is a priority, and they certainly do not support demands for more places for babies because however excellent that day care might be, they think it’s best if they are cared for by their mothers.”

Leach commented “Those findings suggest that there are many professionals in infant mental health who believe that children’s best interests would be served by patterns of early child care diametrically opposed to those politicians promise, policy-makers aspire to provide and parents strive to find.”

She concluded by asking “Are we making child care policy and developing its practices without listening to concerned professionals? Or are professionals unable or unwilling to make themselves heard?”

*Leach P. Attachment: facing the professional demands of today’s research findings. Anna Freud Centenary Lecture. 30 November 1995. Reported in Early Development and Parenting, Vol. 6 (2), 47-58 (1997) This study was carried out in collaboration with Dr. Elliott Barker, Canada and with the support of Mary Ainsworth, U.S.A.*



**What many infant mental health professionals  
PRIVATELY think is the best care for children  
up to age three.**

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**see inside back cover for details**