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Concepts of Care in After-school Programs: Protection, Instruction, and Containment

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the design and implementation of a state-funded after-school program by focusing on the social domains of family, schooling, and law enforcement as they converge at the site of after-school care. In the contested terrain of after-school programs, these different domains incorporate divergent concepts of care that are forced into juxtaposition and engagement. Care is alternatively defined as nurturing protection, instruction, or containment. The collision between these competing definitions explains some of the confusion and passion in debates about child care.

Fifteen years after the event, Arlene still vividly remembered her exhaustion from working nights and her despair and frustration over her son's need for after-school care.

I worked nights and sometimes I would get off work late, like I did today, and I would have to rush home to get [my son] ready for school. My sister would give him breakfast, but he would really want me to get him dressed. So I would rush home and get him dressed and take him to school. And, at that time, he would get out of school at 12:00 and I would be so sleepy. Sometimes I would oversleep, just sleep and leave him there, and the teachers would call me, and they would be so angry that I left him, and they would feel like I was abusing him when it was just that I was tired, and they couldn't see that. So I decided a couple of times, well, I'm going to sleep [in my car] in front of the school, and that way the teacher will see me out there and they will know to knock on the window and bring him out to me, but they couldn't. Even though she would see me out there, she wouldn't knock on the window. So maybe an hour would pass, and then I would finally realize that I didn't have him.

I interviewed Arlene as part of a previous research project on mothers who were employed (Garey, 1999), but I kept remembering her experience as I conducted more recent research on school-based after-school care. If an after-school program had been available to her son, I thought, Arlene might have gotten the sleep she so badly needed, and her son could have been cared for until his mother was able to pick him up. Arlene's experience also resonated with my research on after-school programs because the question of why the teacher wouldn't wake Arlene is an instance of a more general question about the structure of the child care that parents confront.

After-school *care* is contested terrain. The responsibility for taking care of a child during the period between the end of the school day and the time a child's parent can personally take charge is often unclear. In Arlene's case, the contest was over responsibility for the time and space that stretched, when school had ended, from her son's classroom across the school yard to her car parked in front of the school. Arlene found that her work schedule made it difficult to meet the responsibility for that time and space, even though she recognized that the responsibility was seen as being hers and that failing to meet that responsibility was seen by others as being "abusive." The teacher refused responsibility for that time and space for reasons we can only surmise, but she was probably refusing to accept an area of responsibility that was not included in her job description and that she did not see as hers, and she may have resented having that responsibility

thrust upon her. There are, however, other, less visible, participants in addition to the parent and the teacher. The school, the school district, state and federal departments of education and social welfare, social service agencies, teachers' unions, state and federal legislators, law enforcement agencies, the local neighborhood, and the larger community, to name the most obvious, are also involved.

These other participants become more visible when we focus on the social relations that structure after-school care or the lack of it. To understand the situation families face, I analyze after-school care as a site at which several social domains meet. I use the term "social domain" to describe a category of analysis similar to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field." Bourdieu uses "field" to describe "relatively" autonomous social microcosms, i.e., spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are specific and irreducible to those that regulate other fields" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).¹ Within fields, such as law, religion, the arts, or the economy, actions and expectations are guided by a field-specific internal logic, and what has value varies between fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

I use social domain to mean a sphere of social activity and concern that can, like the concept of field, be distinguished in its participants' roles, activities, interests, and perspectives from other social spheres of activity and concern. Although Bourdieu notes that "the concept of field can be used at different levels of aggregation" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104 n57), he also states that a field "is different from the more or less lasting networks through which it manifests itself" (p. 114). The concept of "social domains," however, focuses on the networks in which fields are manifested and in which people are enmeshed. It emphasizes, but is not reducible to, institutional manifestations of fields, such as schools, school boards, childcare advocacy groups, and families. Social domains are geographically located. They take up social space, have members, and bump up against each other.

In this case study, parents, operating within the social domain of family, broadly defined, share the stage with actors from other social domains. At the site of after-school care, parents are faced with the internal logics and practices of the fields of education and government, among others, and the social domains of schooling, law enforcement, legislating, and administration. Each of these social domains incorporates a set of relationships with its own constellation of goals, interests, social logics, cultures, and

perspectives. Sometimes the intentions and actions of people within one social domain mesh or overlap with those in another, but sometimes they compete or collide.

In this paper, I analyze the design and implementation of a state-funded after-school program by focusing on the social domains of family, schooling, and law enforcement as they converge at the site of after-school care. I find that, in the contested terrain of after-school programs, these different domains incorporate divergent concepts of care that are forced into juxtaposition and engagement. Care is alternatively defined as nurturing protection, instruction, or containment. The collision between these competing definitions explains some of the confusion and passion in debates about child care.

Methods

My analysis is based on a multimethod case study of the 1998 California legislation that established state-funded school-based after-school programs and of two of the programs it funded. I began my research in 1999 and conducted interviews and observations between 1999 and 2001. In addition to examining the legislation and its history, I traced the way in which the policy evolved in a particular local context by gathering data in a school district in northern California that had received funding under the new legislation, and I interviewed people involved in the after-school programs and observed the programs operating in two schools in that district.

Both schools covered grades K through 5 and each had an enrollment of around 350 children. Roosevelt Elementary was situated in a low-income neighborhood of small houses and apartment buildings. In 1999, the racial-ethnic composition of Roosevelt was 40% African American, 13% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 12% interracial, 27% White, and 0.2% other ethnic categories (category descriptions used by the school district). Manchester Elementary was located in an upper-middle-class affluent neighborhood of two-story, four-plus bedroom detached houses. In 1999, the racial-ethnic composition of Manchester Elementary was 34% African American, 19% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian, 13% interracial, 29% White, and 0.1% other ethnic categories.² In most elementary schools in the district, the proportions of black students and white non-Hispanic students were maintained within a few percentage points of each other. Bussing to balance race proportionally meant that many children did not live in the same neighborhood as the school they attended.

In addition to observations in the after-school programs, I attended program collaborative meetings, program-based parent meetings, a meeting of county-level agencies, and a conference on school-age care in which several sessions were devoted to the new legislation and the programs it funded. I spoke with officials in the Department of Education, principals and teachers in the schools where the programs were based, coordinators of the after-school programs, school-district officials, the grant writers who had written the school district's successful proposal, child-care advocates, and parents whose children attended the schools where the programs were based.

After-school Care and the Social Domain of Family

To describe the social domain of family is not to categorize individual families, with all their differences, problems, failings, and successes. Rather, as a category of analysis, the social domain of family refers to the normative or ideal-typical social space that contemporary U.S. families inhabit as groups connected by ties of kinship and socially charged with the care of children.

Because my work as a college professor does not bring me into direct daily contact with children under the age of eighteen, and most of my encounters with children are as a family member or as the family friend of someone with young children, my experience of and relationship to children is firmly rooted in the social domain of family.” When I think about child care, I begin from a perspective within that social domain and am concerned both with what parents need in order to leave their children in the care of others and with what children need for their physical, emotional, and social well-being and development. My perspective is that of an adult family member, and my concept of care is oriented toward the nurturance of children. My concerns regarding child care seem to me self-evident. Like the fish and her watery environment, people take for granted the logic of their own domains. What seems obvious or taken-for-granted within the context of one social domain is not necessarily a concern in the context of another. Being situated in the domain of family gives me an understanding and a “feel” for the world described to me by parents, but as a sociologist and social researcher, I also step outside of the family domain and take account of the multiple domains that intersect at the site of after-school care.

One of the most important issues for employed parents is the provision of adequate care for their children during the hours that parents are at their jobs. Much of the attention to the issue of child care has focused on providing care for infants and preschool children, but the need and desire for child care continue during children's elementary- and middle-school years. The school day, however, is not structured to accommodate the work schedules of parents, even though in 2000 almost two-thirds (64 percent) of U.S. married couples with children under the age of eighteen were dual earners (United States Bureau of the Census, 2001, table 579), and about 80 percent of mothers with school-age children were employed (United States Bureau of the Census, 2001, table 577). The weekday care provided by schools disappears during the summer or, in year-round schools, for periodic month-long breaks. The school day may begin at 8:00 or 9:00 a.m., but many parents must be at work before that time. Not only is there a lack of coordination between the school day and parental schedules, but there is tremendous variation in schedules across schools. School days may end at 3:30 in one place and at noon in another; weekly early-release days are common. The lack of coordination between employment and school schedules is generally taken for granted and treated as given, leaving parents with the responsibility and the worry of how to provide care for school-age children in the interstices between their children's school days and their own work schedules.

One explanation for the relative acceptance of these arbitrary temporal structures is that, in contemporary U.S. society, both being employed and caring for children are seen as individual responsibilities. Solutions to problems that arise are therefore privatized. Fathers have, in general, dealt with the problem of child care during their work hours by relegating that care to the mothers of their children (Townsend, 2002). Some parents rely on personal networks of kin and friends to help provide child care. Others lack such networks of reciprocity (Hansen, 2002). Some couples use shiftwork as a family strategy to provide maximum familial care for their children (Garey, 1999; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Presser, 1988), and many mothers try to organize work schedules around their children's school hours and events (Garey, 1999).

Some child-care solutions are no longer as available as they once were. With over three-fourths of the mothers of school-age children in the workforce, fewer mothers are at home during the hours from

the end of the school day until 6:00 p.m., and informal care from neighbors and female relatives is no longer as widely available as it was three or four decades ago. The changes that have increased the need for around-school care have, at the same time, reduced the supply of informal and unpaid care. They have also sharply reduced the extent of adult presence in residential neighborhoods. Families meet the need for after-school care in a variety of ways. Some use private fee-based services provided by individuals, private child-care businesses, and non-profit groups such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs. Some use city-, state-, and federally-funded programs that are targeted at particular, usually low-income, groups of children, as well as city and county parks and recreation programs. After-school programs also vary in their settings, which may be private homes, child-care facilities, city parks, public schools, or other institutional environments. Many of the people who need after-school care for their children, however, cannot access the wide variety of after-school programs because of program design, structure, cost, or availability.

The need and demand for after-school care is great, and studies estimate that there is twice as much demand as available programs can meet. In 1998, it was predicted that, by 2002, existing programs in some urban areas would be able to meet only 20 percent of the demand for after-school programs (United States Department of Education & United States Department of Justice, 2000, p. 56). A 1998 survey estimates that out-of-school-time programs are serving less than 20 percent of the five- to fourteen-year-old children who need such care (Bundy, 1998). Not only is there high demand and need, there is also strong public support for after-school programs. A 1998 Mott Foundation poll found that “four of every five respondents said they would be willing to raise their taxes to fund after-school programs in their communities. This support crossed party lines and was equally strong between [*sic*] parents and non-parents” (Children’s Defense Fund, 1999, p. 55). A 1999 national survey by the Mott Foundation found that two-thirds of respondents thought that federal or state taxes should be used for daily after-school programs (United States Department of Education & United States Department of Justice, 2000, p. 6).

The widespread support for after-school programs is linked to the need for care of school-age children whose parents are not at home during the afternoon. But care” is not only a fuzzy term (in both the senses of “warm and fuzzy” and “ill-defined”) it is also a concept that is defined or valued differently by those who support after-school programs from positions within different social domains, such as schooling,

law enforcement, and family. In my examination of the concept of “care” from the perspective of social domains, three attendant concepts of care emerged: nurturing protection, instruction, and containment.

The Multiple Social Domains of Care

From the perspective of families whose school-age children were enrolled in the state-funded after-school programs at Manchester and Roosevelt Elementary Schools, “care” meant not only the safety of their children during after-school hours, but also the nurturance of children within a safe environment. Parents are likely to think that these concerns are shared by others who are involved with the care of their children, whether directly, as in the case of child-care workers and teachers, or indirectly, as in the case of social workers or legislators who are charged with overseeing the public good and with creating child-care health and safety regulations. When parents discover that some of the people or groups involved with the care of their children do not seem to share their concerns, they may judge them as wrong, misguided, or motivated by narrow self-interests. For example, if the director of a child-care center does not hire enough child-care teachers to meet health and safety standards, parents may question whether the director shares their concern for nurturing protection or whether she is more concerned with saving money or making a profit. Or, if parents believe that the child-care director shares their concerns, yet acts in ways that either do not further those concerns or actually undermine them, then parents may simply be confused at what they see as her “irrationality.” Although I start from the perspective and experience of parents, an analysis that finds the actions of some groups or some people “wrong, misguided, or irrational” is not a *sociological* analysis. It is necessary to take account of the existence of the respective contexts of multiple social domains.

After-school programs are not solely or necessarily designed to meet the needs families. Neither are they solely or necessarily oriented toward the concept of care expressed by parents. Rather, they are aimed at meeting a variety of overlapping but separate goals, such as enabling parents to be employed, supervising children in order to reduce juvenile crime and increase juvenile safety, supplementing the school day with more educational opportunities, and building a sense of neighborhood community (Bundy, 1998, p. 2). The importance of and relative emphasis placed on any of these goals varies by social domain, and any domain that is involved with the issue of after-school care is likely to have both alliances and conflicts

with any of the others.³ In the case of California after-school care programs, relevant social actors include government officials, teachers, business people, social workers, police, advocacy group workers, employee union members, politicians, taxpayers, and parents with school-age children. Each brings to the encounter the assumptions, definitions, and logics of his or her respective social domain.

I have pointed to the need for after-school *care* and the existence of after-school *programs*. The distinction is important. Children need to be *cared for* in some way, but after-school programs do not necessarily include *caring work* as part of their mandate. There are many perspectives about whether or not a particular program does or should include “care.” This is understandably difficult for parents to comprehend. How can programs for children not include a caregiving component as part of their purpose?

Concepts of Care

Joan Tronto (1993, p. 106) has identified and distinguished four “phases” of care: caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving.⁴ “Caring about” refers to “the recognition in the first place that care is necessary” (p. 106). “Taking care of” refers to taking the responsibility for care (p. 106). In other words, who has or should have the task of seeing that care takes place, and who has failed if care is absent or inadequate? Only “caregiving” the third phase of Tronto’s model, is defined as directly meeting another person’s care needs through personal contact and physical work (p. 107). Caregiving is the direct physical and interactional caring that one person does for another, but what does being responsible for care mean? Does it mean directly providing the needed care, or does it mean seeing that the care takes place?

Until a certain age, which varies between cultures and over time, those people defined as “children” are seen as needing others who will be responsible for their care. Although most people in the U.S. recognize that children need care (caring about), the strong sentiment is that the biological or social parents, and most especially mothers, are responsible for their children’s care (taking care of). “Tronto’s first two phases of care are useful categories for thinking about the responsibility for care, parent’s needs for the care of their children, and the ability or willingness of after-school programs to provide that care. When thinking about children, however, it is useful to further divide “taking care of” into a *continuing* “ultimate

responsibility” for a person’s care in all areas and at all times and a *temporary* Abounded responsibility,” by which I mean the responsibility for the care of a person during a particular time or for a particular aspect of a person’s care. Physicians, for example, have bounded responsibility for their patients’ health while they are under their care. Teachers have bounded responsibility for the safety of their students while they are at school and for their students’ education during the year those students are in their classroom. Although others may have bounded responsibility for aspects of a child’s welfare, the ultimate responsibility of mothers almost always trumps the bounded responsibility of others when things go wrong.⁵ If a child-care worker allows harm to befall a child, public condemnation, if not legal consequence, is extended to the mother who made the wrong choice of care worker. The ultimate responsibility for “taking care of” does not often transfer to those with bounded responsibility for children. Ultimate responsibility, as evidenced, for example, by the public reaction to school shootings, is also not generally seen as a responsibility of the social group or the prevailing culture and thus stays at the level of the individual parent(s).

Each child is *somewhere* at any particular moment; children are physically located in time and space. When the school day and the school’s bounded responsibility end, parents of school-age children must assume parental responsibility in one of three ways: by being home when their children get out of school for the day (parental ultimate responsibility plus parental bounded responsibility), by leaving their children in self care (parental ultimate responsibility plus child’s bounded responsibility), or by delegating the “taking care of” their children to others (parental ultimate responsibility plus non-parental bounded responsibility). Parents who use daily school-based after-school programs are solving the problem of “taking care of” children at a particular time and in a particular place. But those who fund, regulate, design, implement, and carry out that care may have different perspectives on what kind of “care” they are providing.

Legislating Care

In the 1997-98 legislative session, the State of California passed legislation, entitled the “After School Learning and Safe Neighborhood Partnership Program” (ASLSNPP), that provided \$50 million for school-based after-school programs in selected California elementary and middle schools. Unlike state-

funded after-school programs that were targeted toward specific groups designated as “at risk,” these programs would be open to any child attending the funded school. Funds for the programs established by this legislation became available for the 1999-2000 school year. The legislation stipulated that programs must operate at least three hours a day and at least until 6:00 p.m. on every regular school day. In order to serve children from the time the school day ended until 6:00 p.m., many programs had to operate and be staffed for five hours every day. In the school district in which my study was located, for example, kindergarten and first-grade children were released from school at 1:00 in the afternoon, and elementary school children were released at 2:15 p.m., except on Wednesdays, when K-3 grades were all released at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Having an after-school program that covered the hours from the end of the school day until 6:00 p.m. was appreciated by parents, but problems arose because the legislation not only stipulated the hours the programs must operate, but also, for reasons that will be discussed, required that each participating child had to attend five days a week and for at least three hours every day. This requirement created problems for those parents who did not need or want child care every day of the week, as well as for those parents who wanted to take their children home from the program before they had been there a full three hours. Although the coordinators of the after-school programs felt sympathetic to parent’s needs, there was little they could do. Because programs were reimbursed on the basis of attendance, the structure of the funding reinforced the attendance regulations. Program coordinators, preferring to play it safe rather than risk losing needed funds, defined legitimate absences and early releases very narrowly and used the same guidelines used by the school for excused school day absences: illness, doctor appointments, or a death in the family. One program coordinator emphasized the point by saying, “Even if a child’s grandparents come to visit for three weeks, the program doesn’t allow for that.”

Many of the parents I talked to expressed frustration at the pick-up time restrictions. Rinata, a working mother with two children in the after-school program, explained:

I took a really early shift in order to pick up my kids early, to spend more time with my kids, being able to do homework with them and follow them a little bit. And so basically they told me I couldn’t pick up Jason [who is in kindergarten and gets out of school at 1:00 p.m.] until 4:00 and Jennifer until 5:00. That doesn’t make any sense for me to do that. I

was willing to lose all the money for the after-school program even if they were not going to use all the hours, [but] I want to feel free that I can come and pick up my child. I don't need to have this kind of restriction in an after-school program. . . . It's like coercive. And to leave the kids there for a longer time than they really need. . . . I get out of work at 4:00, and I cannot pick up my child until 5:00, so I wait for forty-five minutes in the car.

Just as Arlene wondered why her child's teacher would not come out to the car and wake her up, Rinata wondered why she had to wait in her car for forty-five minutes before she could get her child.

The text of the legislation reflects both the interests of various groups and, by what it includes and what it doesn't include, the relative power of various groups. The implementation of the legislation reflects both the structure imposed by the text and the ways in which various groups are benefitted or disadvantaged by that structure. Implementation also reflects resistance to the structure and strictures of the legislation. In both text and implementation, we may observe the interaction of people who operate within specific social domains with associated concepts of care.

Care as Nurturing Protection, Instruction, or Containmentment

In my analysis, I found that different social domains incorporated different definitions of care and that these differences helped to explain disjunctures between parents' needs and program design. These different conceptions of care fall into three categories: care as nurturing protection, care as instruction, and care as containmentment.

Care as Nurturing Protection. Parents need after-school programs because they want a safe place for their children to be and responsible people to make sure their children are protected from harm. Although parents do differentiate between programs based on additional criteria, this is the definition of care that is most salient to their need for after-school programs. The parents I spoke to or observed differed about the specifics of what they wanted a program to provide in addition to protection, emphasizing variously recreation, homework completion, extracurricular activities, or social interaction. In general, however, they wanted their children to be happy in the program and to get something out of it. Those with the economic means to do so were able to act on their preferences and choose between programs of care; others were limited to what was available given their resources (Garey, 2001).

In their need for after-school care, parents talked about care as protection for their children when they, as parents, were not available to protect their children themselves. This definition of after-school care made it difficult for Rinata, who wanted to pick her children up at 4:00 p.m., to understand why she wasn't allowed to pick her children up from the program until they had each been there for at least three hours. As discussed earlier, Rinata complained that it "doesn't make any sense for me to do that. . . . I don't need to have this kind of restriction in an after-school program." Believing that the issue for the program must be financial, she had explained that she was "willing to lose all the money for the after-school program even if they were not going to use all the hours, [but] I want to feel free that I can come and pick up my child.@ But the issue was not only financial. Rinata defined the care the program provided as substituting for her protection until she was available to do it herself. The social domains of schooling and law enforcement operated according to logics that incorporated different definitions of care.

Care as Instruction. Rinata was unable to make sense of having to wait for forty-five minutes before she could take her children home. But within the social domain of schooling, Rinata's need for protective care of her children until she could pick them up was not a concern. This is not to say that some people who operated within the social domain of schooling were not individually concerned about protective care, but the extent to which after-school programs provided protective and nurturant care for children was a by-product of what those within the social domain of schooling saw as the main purpose of the After-school Learning and Safe Neighborhood Partnership Program. Within the social domain of schooling, the operative concept of care was not protection, but instruction. Programs whose main intent was to provide protective care for children were not considered sites of learning. Officials in the California Department of Education (CDE) made a point of this position. A handout prepared by the CDE and distributed by them to organizations that were interested in applying for funding to start after-school programs under the new legislation included the line: "not designed to provide childcare for working parents." When a CDE official repeated this point to me in an interview about the program, I asked "why?" Without missing a beat, the official replied, "because that's *babysitting*."

A discourse of instruction has been separated from a discourse of caregiving. This bifurcation is a product of many factors, including the desire of embattled public school teachers to distinguish themselves

professionally from low-paid, poorly trained, and devalued child-care workers and to distinguish the image of skilled teaching from the image of unskilled child minders. Although the three-hour-a-day requirement was established by the legislature and not by the CDE, the fact that the program was placed under the jurisdiction of the CDE meant that the program structure was seen as being consistent with the goals of education. When I asked program coordinators why they thought children were required to be in the after-school program for three hours a day, I was told that they assumed the CDE felt that children would not gain the benefits of the program unless they were there for that long. In other words, program staff interpreted the requirement as being consistent with good educational practice, even though some of them did not like the requirement from a family- and/or child-oriented perspective. One county-level social service administrator, frustrated with the separation of education and care, declared, “The state acts as if when children reach age six, they no longer need a child-care person.”

Individuals tried to make sense of things in terms of the logic of the social domain that is most relevant to them in any given situation. Parents, for example, could not make sense of the three-hour requirement in terms of a concept of care as protection and nurturance. As Rinata explained, this was “leav[ing] the kids there for a longer time than they really need.” After-school program personnel made sense of the same requirement in terms of a concept of care that was defined within the social domain of schooling as “care as instruction.”

There should be no inherent difficulty in simultaneously providing both protection and instruction for children. However, just as there are various definitions of care, there are varying perspectives on what kind of learning opportunities should be provided and on their value for after-school programs. Some parents and teachers wanted children to have the opportunity to work on their homework; other parents wanted their children to learn from what they described as the “free play” or “community building” of unstructured activities; still others wanted to provide learning opportunities through extracurricular activities such as dance, music, art, language, and so forth; children may feel that they cannot learn another thing unless they have some non-interactional “down time.” Regardless of what kind of learning is being emphasized, there are ramifications for programs based on care as instruction. If “learning” is a stated goal of the program, then it becomes a specific criterion of evaluation.

The legislation states,

As required by the State Department of Education, after school programs established pursuant to this article shall submit annual outcome based data for evaluation, including measures for academic performance, attendance, and positive behavioral changes. The State Department of Education may consider these outcomes when determining eligibility for grant renewal.

The program is not evaluated by criteria such as how happy the children are, or how safe, or how many friends they make, or how healthy and fit they are. Nor is it evaluated on whether or not it helps families care for their children. The focus here is on the evaluation of “academic performance.” State legislatures have repeatedly decided that the way to evaluate “learning” is by administering achievement tests. Indeed, one of the first amendments to the ASLSNPP legislation was to add the word “standardized” to indicate the type of tests that would be used to evaluate the program. When I asked about the outlook for the “program’s” continuation, the coordinator at one of the sites -- a woman who had put in countless unpaid hours to get the program up and running -- said, “If they close this program because test scores don’t rise, it’s going to break my heart.”

Evaluation is used not only as a way of discovering if a program or a practice is achieving the intended goals, but also as a way of making it accountable to its funders. How care is defined within any particular program thus has consequences for what is measured when those programs are evaluated. Care as instruction not only shapes the terms of evaluation, but also articulates with particular state standards and regulations for the “care” of children. The explicit focus on “learning” thus shapes the space that “care” can occupy. By virtue of its location in a public school, for example, an after-school program funded by this legislation is exempt from California state regulations governing staffing standards and ratios for child-care centers. The language of learning and instruction becomes a way of circumventing standards when care is defined as protection and nurturance. These distinctions are manifested in practice, as illustrated by the legislation described here.

In California, the distinction between care as nurturing protection and care as instruction has been bureaucratically embedded in an administrative and jurisdictional division between two state agencies: the California Department of Education (CDE), responsible for the administration and regulation of public

education, and the Department of Social Services (DSS), one of several state agencies responsible for public health and safety. The mission of DSS is to provide “services and *protection* to needy children and adults [my emphasis] (California Department of Education 1996). Within the CDE, the Child Development Division (CDD) has responsibility for “promoting high-quality child development programs” (California Department of Education, 1996). The state regulations that apply to any particular program depend on whether that program has been placed under the jurisdiction of CDE or DSS and whether or not the program is deemed exempt from any of these regulations. This is no small matter.

All CDE child development programs fall under Title 5 of the California Code of Regulation, which stipulates the staffing standards and ratios that apply to CDE direct-service programs, unless they are school-age programs. These school-age programs are therefore exempt from Title 5. However, programs that are exempt from Title 5, including school-age programs, are then governed by the licensing requirements that govern DSS programs, except in the case of license-exempt providers. Schools and school districts are license-exempt providers. The result is that there are no staffing standards or adult/child ratio requirements for state-provided after-school programs unless they are written into the legislation.

The DSS licensing requirements that would apply if the program were not license-exempt call for a one to fourteen staff to child ratio and a one to twenty-eight teacher to child ratio for children in kindergarten and above. In other words, there must be one qualified child-care teacher and one other staff person for every twenty-eight children. A qualified teacher is defined as someone who holds a Child Development Associate Teacher permit or as someone who has a Child Development Associate credential or twelve course units in early childhood education, physical education, recreation, elementary education, human services, or social welfare, plus six months of experience. The ASLSNPP did not have to follow these requirements, and the original intent of the legislators was to include no requirements at all about staffing ratios. Child advocacy groups fought a sustained battle to include a staffing ratio requirement in the legislation and succeeded in including a pupil-to-staff member ratio of no more than 20 to 1, a level that was far lower than that desired by child advocates or required by DSS licensing requirements. Staffing standards are similarly lower than the standards for other programs. The legislation states that the minimum qualifications for each staff position are to be established by the individual administrator of each program.

The only restriction is that staff who directly supervise children should “meet the minimum qualifications for an instructional aide, pursuant to the policies of the school district,” and all staff must have fingerprint clearance. Individual school districts had different job descriptions for being an aide and different qualifications for filling that position. This variation created some problems that had to be rectified at the level of the school district. In some counties, for example, an “instructional aide” could not legally be the sole supervisor of children, and therefore the minimum staffing requirement in those districts had to be increased to an “instructional technician.” The legislation thus established a “minimum staffing standard@ that was not uniform across programs.

The decision to place these programs under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Education was made in the legislature, and the reasons for placing them there are understandable in terms of state politics. For legislators, improving education and raising test scores are acceptable political platforms, but increasing state responsibility for child care is not. The use of school buildings for after-school programs is seen as cost-effective; low child-adult ratios are not. Legislators are reluctant to spend public money on child care, but feel they can better defend programs that are aimed at preparing children for school or preventing crime (Harrington, 1999, p. 190 n. 7). Voter polls reinforce this perspective. A statewide voter poll in Massachusetts found that child care was a low priority for voters, but that health care, improving education, and preventing juvenile crime were issues of major concern (Blood, 2000). The nationwide Mott Foundation studies (mentioned earlier) that indicate voter support for after-school programs may be reflecting concerns with education and crime rather than support for state-funded care of children. The conclusion reached by some child-care advocates is to link the issue of child care to education, but others are more troubled by a focus on education that excludes care.

Care as Containment. The legislation I examined is dominated by a concept of care as instruction, but it became clear to me that the legislatively formed shape of the programs was also directed at the “containment” of children. Containing children may be for their own protection, as when a baby is confined within a playpen, or may be for the protection of others, as when children who commit criminal acts are sent to juvenile detention centers. When protecting children is a motivation, the concept of “care as protection and nurturance” is emphasized. When protecting others *from children*, the concept of care that is

emphasized is “care as containment.” The linking of children as actual or potential victims and children as threats is not uncommon (Thorne, 1987). The concept of care as containment is associated with the social domain of law enforcement.

The social domain of law enforcement is less visible than the social domain of schooling in the dynamics of after-school program legislation. At a meeting of county-level social service agency administrators, one agency director tried to make sense of the state-funded after-school programs by ruling out what they were not: “It’s not child care and it’s not school.” The original title of the After-school Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program Act was the Extended School Day Activities and Violence Reduction Act. Notice that none of the terms in the original title embraced the concept of “learning.” The original title indicates the aim of extending the time children are at the school site (containing them physically) and adding “activities” (keeping them busy, thus containing them behaviorally), but the notion of learning, schooling, or education was added later. The “violence reduction” component of the title was dropped altogether and replaced with the more benign concept of “safe neighborhoods.” The new title of the legislation and the program thus “create an appearance of neutrality and impersonality” in which other motivations are concealed (Smith, 1990, p. 65). In this case, the references to learning and safe neighborhoods mask the involvement of the social domain of law enforcement. But care as containment is embedded in the legislation even if not in the title. The criteria for evaluation of the ASLSNPP programs include “attendance” at school and “positive behavioral changes,” which are measured in referrals for discipline. One of the goals of the legislators who designed the program was to affect children’s rule-following behavior outside the program.

The social domain of family bumps up against the domain of law enforcement when Rinata has to sit in her car for forty-five minutes before being allowed to take her children home from the after-school program. The stipulation of the legislation that programs must operate three hours a day, until at least 6:00 p.m., is synonymous with saying that programs must operate from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., the hours that have been labeled “critical hours” in terms of juvenile crime (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). In 1997, a “critical hours” campaign targeted primarily at middle-school children was launched in San Diego, California. In talking about their program, San Diego legislators coupled the goal of children’s

safety with the goal of reducing juvenile crime during these hours. County Supervisor Greg Cox was quoted as saying that “our youth are not only turning to criminal behavior, but they themselves are increasingly becoming the victims of crime.” Assemblywoman Susan Davis talked about the after-school programs as “offering young people real alternatives to crime” (Roberts, 1997). California state legislators had used the San Diego critical-hours model in crafting the ASLSNPP legislation, and the after-school programs were similar in design and intention.

The protection of children and the protection of others from children are both concerns within the field of law enforcement. However, law enforcement’s emphasis on care as containment differs from the concern of families for care that protects and nurtures their children. These differing conceptions of care may at times reinforce each other, as they do when the Justice Department provides funding for the after-school care that employed parents need. At other times, conceptions of care may clash, as they do when children are not allowed to leave the program and go home until they have been there for three hours. What seems illogical when considered from the perspective of parents is a more reasonable action from within the social domain of law enforcement.

Conclusion

In a feature story on teaching in public schools, radio journalist Susan Stamberg noted sadly that nowadays “so much of the job is either being a substitute parent or a cop” (Stamberg, 2001). Ms. Stanberg was succinctly expressing a division between the tasks of educating young minds, nurturing and emotionally supporting children, and enforcing order and safety. She is not alone or unusual in making these distinctions, nor is she unusual in the view that neither the nurturance nor the control of children should be part of what teachers have to do. However, she is wrong in her assumption that the conflation of instruction, protection, and containment is a recent phenomenon. It is not the conflation of these concepts, but their separation, that is new. It was not that long ago that colleges were in the role of *loco parentis*, and one of the distinctions between small liberal arts colleges and larger research universities is the focus of the former on all aspects of their students’ lives. In colonial times, Americans accepted the idea still prevalent in the African-American community that any adult in the community might provide care or discipline to any child of that community

(Kaplan 1997). The reasons that caring has become separated into nurturing protection, instruction, and containment is beyond the scope of this paper, although it is possible that increasing specialization and the devaluing of physical caregiving combine to remove nurturing and protective care from being an integral part of other, more highly valued, activities.

In trying to make sense of the after-school program's rules and structure, parents apply the logic and value system of the family domain. By the same token, educators and program personnel explain regulations in terms of educational practice, and politicians are concerned with voter appeal. For families in need of care for their school-age children, the concept of care is not as straightforward as they might think. In order to understand how things come to be as they are, we must identify the social domains that intersect at any particular site and examine the logics and values they bring to the situation. In the case of state-funded school-based after-school programs, care that is defined as "instruction" both displaces the need for "care as protection and nurturance" which is devalued as "babysitting," and conceals the motive of "care as containment."

Notes

1. Bourdieu's insistence on the use of "open concepts" makes him reluctant to define "field" with any precision, although he has discussed this concept at some length. Bourdieu has used the idea of field to mean "a network . . . of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). However, because Bourdieu treats social life in general as made up of networks of relations categorized into fields with differing rules of play, he provides no terms to conceptualize specific manifestations or levels of these networks. He uses terms such as "subfield" to discuss different levels of a field: "Every subfield" has its own logic, rules and regularities . . . (as, for instance, when you move down from the level of the literary field to that of the subfield of novel or theater)@ (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.104). The "literary field" in turn, is presumably a subfield of the artistic field. Although Bourdieu's image is consistent with his position that all social phenomena are relational and that the dynamics of these relations are the same at all levels, a conceptualization that allows for more distinction between different categories of the manifestations of fields is needed.

2. Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

3. There are, of course, disputes and differing interests within as well as between domains. However, although people in different positions within the same domain may disagree or bring different perspectives to the same issue, they will tend to disagree *within the framework of their shared domain*.

4. I do not discuss "care receiving," Tronto's fourth phase of care, in this paper. Care-receiving refers to the necessity to take account of the response of the care-receiver to the care received (Tronto 1993, p.108). Rivka Polatnick (2002), in her study of middle-school children's response to after-school care, focuses directly on children's responses, as care-receivers, to the provision of after-school care. I have discussed elsewhere the active part that children play in the assessment of their own care (Garey, 2001). In the collisions between parental needs for child care and the structure of the after-school program, the identity and definition of the care receiver varies between social domains and therefore complicate the assessment of care receiving.

5. Parents are not held equally responsible, and mothers are usually treated as the default parent (Townsend, 2002; Walzer, 1998) as well as the parent at fault (Garey & Arendell, 2001).

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