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Class Contingencies in Networks of Care for School-Aged Children

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Abstract

  This paper looks deeply at the manifest ways that working parents construct networks to help them care for their school-aged children. It explores how class contingencies shape the resources available to networks and how, in turn, people, given a particular constellation of resources, dynamically construct and call upon networks. Anchors consider a variety of issues in constructing their networks, including shared child rearing values, kinship status, convenience, and expertise.

  The larger study from which these findings are drawn, based in a metropolitan area in Northern California, comparatively explores the connections between care giving, kinship, and class contingencies. It approaches each network as a case study, identifying and studying four cases across the economic spectrum: working class, middle class, professional middle class, and upper class. Through these comparisons it identifies the middle-class cases as unique rather than normative. The study's forty interviews include all of the people named by the network anchors as involved in giving direct care to children or support and advice to the parents.

This paper investigates class contingencies in shaping networks of care for school-aged children. By contingencies, I mean occurrences or dynamics that are connected to class but are not determined by it and that shape and reflect a particular constellation of resources (Garey 1999). In the social sciences, class has been a key dimension of comparison in analyzing extended kinship and networks of support (Bott 1971; Fischer 1982; Rubin 1976, 1994; Stacey 1990; Young and Willmott 1992), along with race (Hofferth 1984; Hogan et al. 1990). This paper has two objectives: to deepen an understanding of the processes and class contingencies involved in forming a particular type of network – one that focuses on the care of school-aged children – and to broaden the standard sociological approach to class comparison by including the upper class as well as the standard middle and working classes.

The findings and interpretations about the role of class in extended family networks have flip-flopped in the past thirty years. The research of the 1960s and 1970s found that poor and working-class families participated in "networks of survival" (Anderson and Allen 1984; McAdoo 1980; Stack 1974), while the middle classes were much less likely to do so. Poor, working-class, ethnic/racial, and immigrant communities were found to have a greater incidence of kin involvement than middle-class, Euro-American communities (Fischer 1982). Social scientists interpreted the findings to mean that families participated in networks of support only if they could not purchase what they needed. In other words, the networks were born of necessity and economic scarcity. Middle-class and Euro-American families were found to be more nuclear in their structure and cultural orientation and less familistic[1] in their values, which in effect meant that they asked for and received less help. This nuclearity was interpreted as greater self-sufficiency and a measure of their success.[2]

Research in the 1980s and 1990s found a reversal in class patterns of reliance on networks. The research showed that the more economic and educational resources a family has to draw upon, the more it helps others and receives help in turn (Eggebeen and Hogan 1990; Roschelle 1997; White and Riedmann 1992). The emergent interpretation is that families with more cultural capital are better equipped to participate in a network; in effect, they have more to share, especially when compared to poorer families that do not have enough and risk endangering their own well-being by sharing. In the end, a family resorts to purchasing help only

when friends and relatives cannot provide it. In other words, the connectedness of middle-class families was interpreted as a marker of health and vibrancy and a measure of their success. [3]

Researchers discuss two primary reasons for the dramatic differences in findings over the thirty-year period: one structural and one methodological. First, scholars explain that the shift in findings could reflect a genuine inversion of the resources available to families (Roschelle 1997). The major change could be the result of social and economic processes that altered the basic landscape of poor and working class communities. This includes the transformation to a post-industrial economy, which reduces the number of manufacturing jobs in general, but especially in inner cities (Wilson 1997) and pulls more women into the paid labor force. Fifty-two per cent of women with children ages six to seventeen worked in 1970 versus 79% in 1999 (Heymann 2000:214). In effect, these changes create a widening gap of time availability (Heymann 2000) and reduce the number of women who can devote themselves to kin keeping (Di Leonardo 1987) and community work (Putnam 2000). Especially hard hit have been poor and working-class communities that rely on the activism and presence of women who have been pressed into paid employment in the 1990s by the Clinton administration's so called "welfare reform" (Oliker 2000). And, as Roschelle (1997) aptly points out, the 1980s hit poor and working class families particularly hard as crack invaded poor neighborhoods and the Reagan administration implemented policies that widened the wealth and income gaps through tax legislation, dismantling affirmative action, and union busting. In sum, the structural changes have been deep and profound and offer a compelling, although partial, explanation of the changes over time.

Second, the other explanation for the reversal in findings about network involvement looks to differences in methodological approach: the earlier studies tended to be largely ethnographic (e.g., Stack 1974), which means cases are not representative of or generalizable to the country as a whole and not systematically comparative. [4] As Roschelle (1997) points out, even when the studies attempt to compare class and ethnicity, they have not been designed with sufficient comparability in cases to allow researchers to disentangle analytically race and class effects. In contrast, the more recent studies are based on large quantitative data sets that are national in scope and based on samples representative of the U.S. population as a whole (Hogan et al. 1993; Roschelle 1997).

The methodological differences are troubling because they suggest that findings may be an artifact of the methods used. Some might argue that because the ethnographies are idiosyncratic (local, small, qualitative), their findings do not hold. Others would argue that although the national surveys are broadly representative, they do not capture the dynamic dimensions of human interaction that cannot be fit onto a questionnaire. I would argue that the two methods ask different kinds of questions and as a result elicit different kinds of findings. The quantitative studies can document the shift in attitudes, the number of contacts over a given period of time, and lists of services provided; they cannot explore the interpretation and meanings of reliance on extended kin and networks of care. The qualitative studies can capture the complexity of structural and micro processes and be systematically comparative, if done on a small scale.

This study uses a qualitative approach to studying networks, one that includes a comparative dimension. It answers this need to look in-depth at cultural valuations of kinship and network involvement and at the messy (but nonetheless systematic) way that networks operate.

In particular, this paper investigates a specific kind of network – one focused on helping parents care for their children while they are working and the children are not in school. The project asks how working parents, in several economic locations, construct networks of people (rather than institutions) to cover the gap in after-school and before-school care.[5] With 79% of mothers with children ages six to seventeen in the labor force and an inadequate supply of before- and after-school programs, as a society, we face a "care gap" for elementary school-aged children. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (1998) estimates the difference between school hours and parents' working hours to be as high as twenty to twenty-five hours per week. My assumption in beginning this research was that working parents, no matter how well organized, no matter how reliable, have difficulty in making sure their children are supervised during the care gap. And in addition, I wanted to know upon whom they relied for advice in sorting out these issues and those related to rearing their children in general.

I define a network of care as that group of people identified by an anchor[6] – the person at the absolute center of the child-rearing project (in this research, a parent) – who helps rear a

child. Even when a child formally has full-time coverage from a day care center, an after-school program, or a babysitter at home, and even with two adults devoted to the child and committed to equitable responsibility for care, cracks inevitably form in the system. Children get sick; babysitters get delayed; parents get stuck in traffic and fail to arrive at the day care center within the tiny window of time designated for pickup (Thorne 1999). Some segments of the networks of care operate weekly and predictably; others are on stand-by, ready to be activated when necessary.

In the end, these networks of care may not furnish the greatest absolute number of hours a child spends with a nonparent (although they may). Nonetheless, the networks help to cultivate a greater sense of possibility in the world for the anchors and to create a larger margin of safety than would otherwise exist for the children (Townsend 1999). They teach children important things by example (Marshall et al. 2001). They shore up an inadequate system of child care available through the formal school system and the unforgiving workplace structures that contribute to the pinch parents feel (Garey 1999; Gerstel 2000; Hochschild 1997). In addition to providing supervision, these networks of care emotionally support parents and offer child-rearing suggestions and advice. The networks utilize different skills of members in the network, who offer varying types of expertise that are shaped by class location. Some networks are more robust and pliable; others are thin and brittle; but whatever their size and elasticity, they provide an invaluable safety net.

In this project on networks of care for children, I have opted to focus on class comparisons, rather than race/ethnicity or both, because it was not possible to do both in a small study.[7] Theoretically, I set out to revitalize a discussion about class, families, and networks of involvement. I expand the range of comparison to include not only working-class and middle-class cases, but also an upper-class case.

There are several reasons for extending the class categories beyond the working-class versus middle-class families commonly found in comparative research (DeVault 1991; Lareau 2000; Rubin 1976). First, although the upper class has been studied in relation to economic activity (Baltzell 1979; Domhoff 1970; Mills 1956), political activity (Domhoff 1970), and volunteering and civic life (Daniels 1988; Ostrander 1984), its family practices and child rearing

philosophies have not been studied. Given the importance of child rearing in the reproduction of class, in a society that venerates the middle class but accepts a huge concentration of wealth by a small percentage of the population (Keister 2000), this strikes me as a huge oversight. Second, working-class families are more likely to share several important features with upper-class families rather than with the middle-class families to which they are frequently compared: fertility patterns; valuation of kinship ties; and the utilization of available family resources, for example, in obtaining a job (Baltzell 1991; Schneider and Smith 1978). Third, such a comparison puts the undifferentiated middle in relief, highlighting its uniqueness rather than treating it as normative. Importantly, the similarities occur within a context of stark contrasts and profound economic differences between classes. This hole in the literature poses a ripe opportunity to examine comparatively family practices and network construction in the interstices of home, work, and school.

This paper looks deeply at the manifest ways that networks of care for children are constructed. It asks how working parents in different economic and social locations cover the care gap for their school-aged children. It explores the role of kin across case studies and analyzes the ways that class contingencies shape parents' inclusion of certain people in the network and their expectations of them.

Methods of Inquiry

Research focusing on networks of individuals, rather than of families, flourishes side by side in the literature on kinship and extended support systems. Wellman (1999) reports that the typical approach to a network study involves interviewing a large sample of "focal persons," asking them to report on their networks.[8] Although there are methodological limitations to asking people to report what others do for them without getting the complementary accounts, according to Wellman, it is virtually impossible to analyze quantitatively the networks from each participant's point of view. In addition, because the majority of network studies are quantitative, they cannot methodologically handle data that are not composed of "independent" observations because of the requirements of statistical testing. I would argue that networks, by their very nature, are composed of people *not* independent of one another. Moreover, generating a random,

nationally representative sample while producing statistically generalizable findings, can miss the very essence of networks – that is, their overlapping circles of dependency – and methodologically tilt the findings toward a more disconnected portrait of the world (e.g., Rubin 1994). Looking at a network from each participant's point of view is something that can be done only on a small scale.

I have taken an approach that allows for an in-depth look at the dynamics and that structures an illuminating comparison. Based in the Northern California Bay Area, this study approaches the informal care of children by investigating the networks – those individuals connected to a central person, the anchor, in providing direct care for the anchor's children and/or support and advice for the anchor.[9] My objective is to understand the internal processes of networks, something that could be accomplished only through qualitative, in-depth interviews or fieldwork. These networks are not intended to be representative – not of the anchors' class positions, their particular child care arrangements, or the division of labor within the network. They are intended to provide insight into the *internal dynamics* of these specialized networks of care, situated in particular social and economic locations.

Rather than interview "independent" individuals, I have studied connected individuals. I have approached each network as a case study (Burowoy 1998) with the objective of interviewing everyone in each network. I began by recruiting four network anchors who: (1) had children between the ages of five and twelve, (2) had a partner in rearing their children, and (3) were employed. I recruited the anchors by activating my own networks of friends, kin, and colleagues to search for working couples in different class locations, guaranteeing at least two degrees of separation from me. After discussing the possible candidate with me to make sure s/he met my criteria, my contact would discuss possible participation in the study with that person. If s/he agreed to be approached, I called and discussed the possibility of an interview. Everyone I called agreed to participate in the study.

Table 1

NETWORK COMPOSITION

Relationship To Child	Crane	Becker	Duvall-Brennan	Aldrich	TOTAL
Mother of child	1	1	1	1	4
Father of child	1	1	1	1	4
Uncle	1	2	1	--	4
Friend of parent and/or neighbor	1	--	5	2	8
Aunt	--	3	2	--	5
Grandmother	1	1	--	1	3
Paid caregiver	--	--	--	2	2
Grandfather	--	1	--	--	1
TOTAL	5	9	10	7	31

At the end of my first interview with each anchor, I asked her/him to enumerate those who were involved in caring directly for the children and those who provided emotional or practical support and/or advice to the anchor. The lists generated by anchors include neighbors, grandmothers, friends, uncles, aunts, babysitters, and nannies.[10] The networks include both

primary and secondary caregivers. In turn, I then interviewed each person identified about his or her role in the network for the anchor's children. I also asked each about care for his/her own children (if they had them) and his/her own childhood experience as a recipient of care as well as a giver of care (Boulding 1980; Christiansen 1993; Fogel and Melson 1986). The list of people in the network includes those involved in the daily transport of children as well as those who live out of the geographic orbit of daily life (Holloway and Valentine 2000), but contribute invaluable advice and emotional support.

This paper is based on interviews with forty people – thirty-seven of whom were identified as members of a network and three of whom have contact with the anchor, but who might only occasionally be drawn into network activities. I was able to interview everyone identified by the anchors as part of their network. Three networks are anchored by a woman, and the fourth by co-anchors, a man and a woman, who jointly coordinate the care of their children. Not by design, all the anchors are forty-something. Of the network interviews, six are with children – three boys and three girls – and thirty-one with adults, approximately one-third with men and two-thirds with women.

I interviewed these forty people at one moment in time. Their stories are ever changing and my portrait of them is necessarily provisional. That said, one advantage of profiling a network rather than a person is that I revisit the network and its issues at different moments in time, from different vantage points. So, for example, as the health crisis of Patricia Crane's mother evolved, I talked to Patricia repeatedly. I interviewed her explicitly three separate times, and, in addition, I saw and spoke to her when I interviewed her mother, her grandmother, her close friend, and her son. I spoke briefly to her in the numerous phone calls I made to arrange the interviews. I interviewed all the children of the networks at the end of the study, which provided me the opportunity for a final visit to the anchors' households and insight into the delights and needs of the children's care.

Table 2

ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE NETWORKS – 1990*

	CRANE	BECKER	DUVAL-BRENNAN	ALDRICH
Class location	Working class	Middle class	Professional middle class	Upper class
Town population	210,943	723, 959	10,602	5,973
Race/ethnicity • **White** • **Black** • **American Indian** • **Asian/Pacific Islander** • **Hispanic origin** • **Other**	33.7% 9.7% 1.1% 22.8% 23.9% 8.9%	40.3% 10.9% .5% 29.1% 13.3% 5.8%	82.5% .8% .2% 12.5% 3.3% .8%	93.6% .2% .1% 3.2% 2.5% .4%
Median *household* **income**	Area: $22,044 City: $26,876	Area: $36,581 City: $33,414	$ 84,498	$ 72,699
Median *family* **income**	Area: $25,685 City: $30,315	Area: $45,950 City: $40,561	$100,131	$ 96,511
Median rent	$ 476	Area: $741 City: $653	$ 1,049 (Mean)	$ 903 (Mean)
Median price of home	Area: $84,901 City: $106,700	Area: $318,500 City: $294,800	$500,001	$500,001
Education • **High school or less** • **Some college** • **BA or more**	55% 30% 15%	40% 25% 35%	11% 23% 67%	16% 20% 64%

* All statistics are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, 1990.

As Table 2 demonstrates, each anchor lives in a community that reflects his/her economic status. The more elite suburbs are more homogeneous (especially racially), more affluent, and more expensive; the cities are more racially heterogeneous and host people with a range of economic resources and less education.

For the purposes of this study, I define class location as a product of several forces – economic and social – including a person's current occupation and job history, education, and wealth (Keister 2000) – not just income, with particular attention to home ownership (Townsend 1999). In assessing class, I am trying to understand the conditions that shape people's lives, the needs of their children, people's perceptions of the needs of their children, and hence the contours of their networks. I also delve into where and how the subjects grew up. I approach class as a relationship, one that changes over time. At the core, my definitions are based on the conditions of work (Wright 1987; Zweig 2000), although not exclusively. So, for example, I define a working-class job as one that demands low skill, offers little power or autonomy in the workplace, and pays low wages.[11]

I use the definition of the upper class articulated by Ostrander (1984:5): "that portion of the population that owns the major share of corporate and personal wealth, exercises dominant power in economic and political affairs, and comprises exclusive social networks and organizations open only to persons born into or selected by this class." Domhoff (1970) points to the importance of attendance at upper-class schools, belonging to certain social clubs, and being listed in the *Social Register*.[12] Like all jobs, upper-class jobs are strongly gendered (Daniels 1988; Ostrander 1984). For men in the upper echelons, this translates into ownership (of the means of production), economic leadership, and political authority; and for women, it means leadership in the community and typically no recompense (volunteer work is a marker of upper-class status).

In between the working class and the upper class is the "anxious middle"[13] hoping to move up, fearful of sliding down (Newman 1999). This is the broadest category and perhaps the least analytically tight. Nonetheless, it includes the broad middle classes that most social scientists and demographers agree constitutes a majority of the U.S. population.[14] For the purposes of this study, a middle-class job requires a college education and will tend to be

managerial and white collar. Given the broad range of middle-class jobs and the even broader range of incomes defined by various scholars as middle class, I distinguish two layers of the middle class – the middle class and the affluent, professional middle class (Ehrenreich 1989). [15]

The anchors in the networks have made a variety of primary child care arrangements. The working-class anchor relies primarily on kin; the middle-class anchor operates on swing shift basis and supplements with kin; the affluent middle-class anchors utilize institutional care for the children; and the upper-class anchor has hired a full-time nanny. These arrangements do not reflect the entire range of child care options in the U.S. (Annie E. Casey Foundation 1998; Michel 1999), nor are they necessarily the most common types of child care within each class location. They do, however, represent a range of strategies and constructed choices that are class linked.[16] The national research on child care points to the importance of kin who provide the majority of care – 53% reported by Presser (1989), and 51% reported by Hunts and Avery (1998). Studies consistently find grandmothers to be the mainstay of the kin corps who provide child care (Hunter 1997; Presser 1989). The factors shaping who cares for children of employed women include: household structure, number and ages of children, race/ethnicity, marital status of the woman, and access to kin (Hunts and Avery 1998).[17]

Profiles of the Four Networks

Working parents in this study struggle with the fact that those in their networks have multiple commitments. If friends or extended kin – such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or siblings – live nearby, it is likely that they too have jobs and other caregiving responsibilities. As one woman I interviewed said about her search for help with her sick son, "I don't know of anybody who'd really help me out with that because everybody I know is a working parent." The members of each of the networks tend largely to share the same class position. The exceptions are those network members who are hired to care for the children. Nonetheless, all of the anchors in this study have constructed networks, which vary in their effectiveness, sufficiency, and helpfulness.

Table 3

**PROFILES OF THE
NETWORKS OF CARE FOR CHILDREN**

	CRANE	**BECKER**	**DUVAL-BRENNAN**	**ALDRICH**
Children	Boy 19 Boy 6	Girl 8 Boy 6	Girl 6 Boy 3	Girl 14 Boy 11
Mother's occupation	Cleaner in truck stop	Photographer	Attorney	Philanthropist/ trustee
Father's occupation	Disabled; former dock foreman	Teacher	Attorney	Developer
Class location	Working class	Middle class	Professional middle class	Upper class
Mother's religion	Christian Salvation Army (raised Salvation Army)	Catholic (raised Catholic)	Unitarian (raised Catholic)	Jewish (raised "nothing")
Father's Religion	Nonpracticing (raised Pentacostal)	Catholic (raised Catholic)	Unitarian (raised Catholic)	Episcopal (raised Episcopalian)
Primary child care strategy	Grandmother + friend/neighbor	Split shift	Institutional	Full-time nanny
Network (in order of reliance and importance)	• Patricia's mother • Patricia's brother • Friend/ neighbor • Father, Robert	• Father, Mark • Dina's mother • Dina's father • Dina's brother • Dina's sister • Dina's sister • Dina's sister • Dina's brother	• Jack's brother & his partner • Former neighbor couple • Former neighbor • 2 friends from Maggie's group • Jack's sister	• Nanny • Father, Alex • Sarah's mother • Friend • Sarah's best friend • Babysitter

The Cranes: A Culture of Family Resilience

The Crane network, part of a four-generation system of care, is based in the San Joaquin Valley of California. Like the Joads, made famous by John Steinbeck's (1939) account of a family's quest for survival during the Great Depression, the Crane family first migrated to California from Oklahoma in search of agricultural work during the 1930s. Over the course of their lives, Patricia Crane, her mother, and her grandmother have all worked in the lettuce packing sheds. Patricia Crane has since worked many jobs, including assembly work in the electronics industry, and most recently at two jobs, one in sanitary maintenance at a truck stop and one as a driver at a car auction. She now lives with her mother, Dotti, and her six year-old son, Robbie, in a one-bedroom apartment on the south side of town, the poorer area of the city, about two hours from the lettuce fields where she grew up. The single-story, mission-style apartment building in which they live functions as a small community, one that has had its share of battles with drug traffic, addiction, and struggling to make it. Patricia's nineteen-year-old son, Brendan, who has a different father than Robbie, is in jail. Patricia's brother, Ben, a foreman at a tree cutting service, lives a couple of doors down from Patricia in the same apartment complex. Patricia's network for Robbie's care consists of her mother, her brother, her next-door neighbor, Tracy, and the father of her son, Robert Sr. As Patricia tells it, Dotti has taken care of Robbie since his birth, and Tracy is the only non-family member who has ever cared for him.

Although the economy in this city is primarily agricultural, small industry has flourished, and the city has become, in effect, an affordable suburb of the San Francisco Bay Area. Home prices and rents are considerably cheaper than anything close to the Silicon economy, which is one of the primary reasons why Patricia and Ben moved there. Patricia also expressed her desire to be closer to her mother as her mother's health had worsened. Ben followed them a year and a half ago, and went into drug rehabilitation at the Salvation Army.

When I first interviewed her, Patricia was working two part-time jobs. The fatigue of worry showed on her face. Lithe and taut with determination, Patricia leaned forward on the couch as she explained the shifting circumstances in her network, prompted by her mother's health crisis. Until one month earlier, her mother, Dotti, had taken care of Robbie after school while she also cared for her own mother, Louise, who was almost ninety and increasingly

debilitated by Alzheimer's disease. Louise lives thirty minutes across town with another daughter. Dotti gets paid (less than minimum wage) for the full-time care of her mother; the money, she says, is to "help with gas money."

When Patricia works, she takes her son mid-morning to the bus stop across the street from their apartment. After school, either her mother picks him up at the bus stop or her brother Ben, does and takes him to his grandmother so she can watch him without leaving Louise, her mother, alone. On the mornings when Patricia has to leave early, Tracy takes over with Robbie. She has become a close friend of Patricia and her four children have embraced Robbie as one of the family. Robbie adores Tracy, referring to her as his "girlfriend," which everyone finds amusing. Although Patricia and Tracy exchange child care, Patricia also pays Tracy occasionally in groceries or small amounts of money for taking care of Robbie. Several evenings a week Ben cares for Robbie while Patricia works the swing shift. Ben, tall and robust with a winning bright smile, identifies himself as the on-site male role model, although he characterizes his relationship with Robbie as more of a brother relationship than that of an uncle or father.

This elaborate system involving four generations and numerous caretakers was put in jeopardy when Dottie was hospitalized for lung cancer. After a month in the hospital, Dotti prepared to convalesce at home, and Patricia struggled to figure out how to keep their system going with reduced people power and increased need. Patricia says, "Now it's gonna be put on me to take care of my mom." In fact, Patricia became the full-time caretaker for all others: she quit both of her jobs when Dottie came home from the hospital and became the anchor in the relay from the south side to the north side of town, with responsibilities for her mother, her grandmother, and her younger son.

Patricia's method of constructing a network for Robbie involved moving in order to be near her mother. The move pulled her out of the daily orbit of Robbie's father, but not out of his influence or participation. Robert Sr. said Patricia has always had a bit of a gypsy about her. He lives with his sister, her husband, and their children, approximately two hours south in the town where both he and Patricia grew up. A former dock foreman in the lettuce fields of San Joaquin Valley, Robert suffered an accident ten years ago that left him with paraplegia. Like a lion's mane, Robert's shoulder-length hair and chest-long beard frame his face, only partially hiding

his warm smile and muffling his raspy voice. When I first met him, he was agilely maneuvering his wheelchair about the crowded garage, finishing up a project, his muscles and tattoos rippling on his exposed skin.

Far from being an absent father, Robert is an active participant in Robbie's life and an important parenting partner to Patricia. He sees Robbie at least one weekend a month and for longer stretches of time in the summer. Patricia says that Robert, who was a close friend of her eldest brother growing up, has been her best friend since high school. And although they have never been married, they have lived together and unequivocally share the project of raising Robbie. Robert sees himself and is seen by Patricia and the rest of her network as engaged and important. He is psychologically involved, emotionally available, and has his own network ready to provide transportation or whatever is needed at a moment's notice. When Dotti was in the hospital, Patricia pulled Robbie out of school and sent him to his father's for the week because she needed to be at the hospital a lot. In his distress over his grandmother's ill health, Robbie had been acting out at school. Both parents agree that when Robbie needs more structure and discipline, his father's home is the place to be. Patricia talks about possibly moving back to live with Robert and his family and bringing her mother along once she gets strong enough.

This network of caregivers struggles with the limitations of its financial resources and its vulnerability to health crises. Paid employment must be molded to the contingencies of life while government support systems – such as Social Security, disability, and AFDC (now TANF) – however inadequate, function as a genuine safety net. In this context, family comes first and provides the central stays of support, although it does not operate in isolation. As Tracy puts it, she and Patricia have a "buddy-buddy system" that makes each person's parenting more effective and alleviates some of their respective stress.

The Beckers: A Culture of Learning and Helping

The second network, the Beckers, is anchored in a solidly middle class family in a diverse and large urban center. The Becker network is wealthy in its people resources and moderate in income. At the center is Dina Becker, a freelance photographer, whose intense brown eyes probe keenly and serve her well in her profession. Her husband, Mark Walde, is a

schoolteacher; and they have two children, Donalyn, age eight and Aaron, age six. Their system for rearing children is built around a split shift strategy (Hertz and Charlton 1989; Presser 1988) and buttressed by considerable kin help. Dina leads the charge in getting the children to their respective schools. Mark, a serious triathlete, bikes to work. Both children attend independent schools, one secular, one religious, in opposite directions from the house. Dina organizes car pools and after-school dance lessons, and she is the primary mobilizer of the child care network. She works at home during the day and hands over the children to Mark when he walks in the door between 4:00 and 5:00. Mark then feeds, bathes, and puts the children to bed while Dina meets with clients and deals with the complicated details of her work. Because a big part of her business involves shooting weddings, she works most weekends as well as evenings.

It is no wonder that when I asked Dina the metaphor that best captures her network, she said "family." A majority of Dina's sizable family of origin lives within a five-mile radius and participates in her network of care: her mother, her father, her two brothers, and three of her sisters. The critical mass of family members ready and willing to help her out means she does not hire babysitters of any type. And although she previously drew a close friend with same-aged children into her child-rearing project, the friend moved across the bridge, thus ending the ease of collaboration and exchange in everyday life. Dina lives in the same city where she grew up, less than two miles (or five minutes) from her childhood home, where her mother and father still live, the geographic center of the Becker network.[18] At a moment's notice, she can call her father or brother to pick up her son from school and reasonably expect them to cover for her.

The Beckers have cultivated a strong sense of familism in a multitude of ways, Catholic values being one of them (although there are varying degrees of religious observance within the extended family). The extended Becker clan is aware of its uniqueness because of its size and because of its members' commitment to each other and to helping neighbors and friends. The family expects everyone to help each other out; it is part of their family culture. A careful examination of the process by which the Beckers have come to identify themselves as family-oriented, Irish Catholic learners and helpers reveals a complex and intentional process.

Dina's characterization of the family as "Irish Catholic" unravels rather quickly. Dina's husband was raised Catholic, but he is of German heritage. Dina's mother is Irish on one side of

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her family and Scandinavian on the other. Dina's paternal grandmother was born in Ireland and immigrated to the U.S. as a young woman; her paternal grandfather was born in Germany. Her father was educated in Jesuit schools; he and his mother worshiped in Catholic churches, but his father did not. Although such a pattern of ethnic choosing, despite the options revealed in family lineage, is consistent with American practices (Waters 1990), in the case of the Becker family it reveals a level of conscious intentionality as well. When Dina's parents, Peter and Susan Becker married, they made a commitment to rear their children in a particular way, with their nuclear family at the very center. Susan Becker mused that the fact of bringing up the children with a common practice of religious observance was more important than the specific religious ideology.

The Becker family ethos figures prominently in their bustling network activities, which reach beyond family members. The Beckers help neighbors and they help each other. Dina's brother, Kent, helps his parents' neighbor who has Alzheimer's. Dina will take the neighbor's wife grocery shopping. Her father, Peter Becker, now retired, has set up a free clinic to clip toenails of the elderly. Dina's sisters, Kerry and Barbara, helped photograph the children at their sister Jayme's day care center and then stayed up virtually all night developing and printing the photos so that the children could take them home as holiday gifts. The list of helping behaviors goes on and on.

The Becker family culture also includes a commitment to life-long learning and personal development, an inquisitiveness strongly cultivated in their children. Dina's sister Lila told me a story about her son's induction into the family culture: "I was delighted when Timothy's first two words that he put together were 'read books.'" It was "such a perfect Becker sentence." She told of a recent situation in which dinosaurs were up for discussion. When Lila couldn't answer a question, her four-year-old daughter suggested that they call her grandmother – the natural science expert among them. As another of Dina's sisters put it, they are a family of "natural born teachers," dedicated to life-long learning.

Although I describe the Beckers as middle class, there is a range of resources within the network, and, importantly, compared to her parents, Dina is downwardly mobile. So rather than experiencing middle-class comfort, she and Mark experience middle-class anxiety, a sense of

just barely hanging onto their place on the economic ladder (Newman 1999). Dina's father is a retired physician. Although he worked at a hospital that did not pay top salary, he is a frugal man, a price shopper who has a lot of "can do" spirit and craft worker skills. This meant that Dina's mother did not have to work at paid employment while she raised her eight children, and she could still afford to hire a housekeeper once a week. When you combine the decline of male wages in the past thirty years (Faludi 2000) with the fact that Dina married a schoolteacher, you find that Dina, like most women of her generation, has to work in order to maintain a foothold in the middle class. And like many middle-class working women, she feels misunderstood, although supported, by her mother, to whom the stresses of the speedup (Hochschild 1989) appear self-imposed.

Dina Becker has great wealth in people resources to help her rear her children. She explains the inspiration for combining her network with a split-shift child care arrangement with her husband: "If you have to pay for child care, that would just push us right over the – we would not be able to try for this new house." The network makes more possible and life richer for her, Mark, and their children. But the dark circles around Dina's eyes belie a sense of calm. Even with a robust network of sixteen hands, Dina and Mark have traded time with each other (and for their marriage) for time with the children and the savings that parental and kin care incurs. Marrying Dina meant marrying her family, which in Mark's estimation was a huge bonus. But the split shift means the couple sees little of each other, and it means no down time and little time together.

The Duvall-Brennans: A Culture Torn between Careers and Intensive Parenting

The third network, the Duvall-Brennans, is well off financially, but stretched extremely thin in terms of people. When I asked Maggie Duvall what metaphor she would use to characterize her network, she said "inadequate." It is anchored by two full-time attorneys, Maggie Duvall and Jack Brennan. They have two children, Danielle, age six and in kindergarten, and Scott, age three and one-half and in a day care center full-time. Maggie and Jack are active co-parents. I consider them co-anchors at the center of the network because they share the psychic as well as organizational work of rearing the children and running the household.

The caregiving network they enumerate consists of Jack's brother and his co-resident partner, three former neighbors, two friends from Maggie's women's group, and Jack's sister who lives on the East Coast. The network list is substantial (it includes eight people in addition to Jack and Maggie), but the ties are thin and brittle. As one former neighbor said, "I don't think they used a lot of support. They really did everything themselves." An air of resignation to the overwhelming demands of careers and parenthood hung over them both (c.f. Hertz 1986). They try to schedule time for exercise and friendship, but neither fits easily into an already full schedule. Maggie met me at the door on the occasion of our first interview, with Scott peeping out from behind her leg. Scott had minutes before thrown up all over the living room and was registering a significant fever. In a calm state of despair and determination, like a runner in a marathon, Maggie told me of the impending work crisis: both she and Jack had non-negotiable court appearances the next day. Jack, with sad eyes and steely hair, explained that, as the manager in his office, he could usually cover a crisis and delegate commitments to others. Not so the next day. With a sick child, immovable work demands, and a network of working people, they frantically searched for someone to stay with Scott the next day.

As with many parents, Maggie and Jack's child care strategy has changed as their children have grown and developed. When Danielle was an infant, Jack stayed home as the primary parent. When he prepared to return to work, they answered an ad posted several blocks from their apartment that said a couple in the neighborhood was looking for a "share care" arrangement. This other couple, Byron and Rebecca, had a "wonderful" babysitter they wanted to share with another family. Maggie and Jack, philosophically predisposed to such an arrangement, answered the ad. In essence, the share care approach worked well for them while Danielle was little, and it also influenced their choices for Scott. The "wonderful" babysitter left their employ and returned to Central America with only one day's notice. The next shared babysitter they hired stayed for a year and a half, but raised concerns about truthfulness and reliability that proved unsettling for all four parents. As a result, Maggie and Jack shifted strategies after they adopted their second child, Scott. Although they liked the share care philosophy, individual in-home babysitters proved too unreliable. For the stability that their jobs demanded, they decided upon institutional care for Scott. In light of their needs as full-time

attorneys with little workplace flexibility, and in the absence of help from their own families, it was the only form of dependable care that could ensure their ability to work and ensure the safety and well-being of Scott. At that point, Danielle was old enough for nursery school, as was her pal, the son of Byron and Rebecca.

As Danielle reached school age, Maggie and Jack deliberated about the prospects of the public education system in the East Bay where they lived. Politically committed to public education, they sought a better school system in a nearby suburb rather than sending their children to private school – the choice as they saw it. In effect, they again chose institutional stability and reliability as the centerpiece of their care system. In the move to a better school system for Danielle, they left behind their neighborhood and friends, Byron and Rebecca, and their downstairs neighbor, Ruth (and her dog, a real friend to Danielle in particular), a single woman who loved children and who had voluntarily filled in some of the gaps in child care. Scott continues in the same day care center he has been in since infancy, and Danielle attends after school at the same site as her kindergarten. In effect, the center of before- and after-school care is institutionally covered. Nonetheless, this full-time care arrangement still necessitates an informal network. Both Maggie and Jack commute to work, one south to Santa Clara County and the other across the Bay Bridge. Both can make the commute in about an hour each way, if there are no accidents or traffic jams, but there are never guarantees. In their new neighborhood which is decidedly more upscale, with single-family homes averaging $515,000 in 1998 (for three bedrooms and two baths), they know virtually no neighbors after six months.

Byron and Rebecca remain friends, but they are not close enough geographically to help them as they had before. Jack's older brother, Tom, and his partner, Teri, live about fifteen miles away and babysit on evenings planned well in advance. In a show of deep commitment, when Danielle was just two, she stayed with them for two weeks while Maggie and Jack traveled to the Midwest to adopt their son. Both Tom and Teri work full-time, but Teri's workplace is fairly close to Scott's child care center, and she has been able to pick him up several times when neither Maggie nor Jack could make the 6:00 pickup time. Other members of the network provide invaluable support and advice, but not practical care. As a result, Maggie and Jack are at

risk when unexpected emergencies arise, such as a feverish and vomiting child. The slightest disruption to their carefully crafted schedule can and does precipitate an emergency.

The children are in child care and/or school approximately ten hours a day. At the same time, both Maggie and Jack feel they are "skating" (Jack's term) on their jobs in order to accommodate family life. Because they prioritize family, they do not put in standard attorney's hours (sixty to eighty hours per week). They feel they are barely holding their work and family lives together. From their perspectives, they are challenging office culture and expected workload by shaving time off both ends of each day and by not taking work home on nights and weekends. As a result, they feel inadequate as parents (Cochran et al. 1990) and as workers.

The Aldriches: A Culture of Philanthropy and Service

The Aldrich network is rooted in California history and politics and reveals a glimpse of a profoundly different circumstance. Sarah Aldrich describes herself as a "woman of means, involved in the community." She grew up in a family whose wealth dates back well into the nineteenth century and that has wielded influence in education, environmentalism, and politics in the state of California. She is the mother of two children, Kimberly, age fourteen, and Jacob, age eleven. After seventeen years of marriage, Sarah separated from her husband, Alex Brolin, about a year and half before I first interviewed her. They have a joint custody arrangement in which the children spend half of their time at each parent's home. The separation made the logistics of child raising much more complicated even though Alex lives only two miles away. Sarah lives in a small town in affluent Marin county, where the average selling price of a house in early 2000 was approximately $1.25 million. Their home is situated on a large piece of property atop a hill, with no immediate neighbors.

Like many women with inherited wealth (Daniels 1988; Ostrander 1984), Sarah has numerous philanthropic commitments and responsibilities that amount to more than a full-time job. She works as trustee on boards of four educational and cultural institutions around the greater Bay Area and chairs two of them. As chair of the board of her son's school alone, she spends at least twenty hours a week. Most of Sarah's professional work is nonpaid; the exception is her position as the chair of the board of the "family office," a corporate entity that pools

investment money from members of the extended family and also organizes collective extended family life. Sarah says she has cut back dramatically on her board work since the separation from her husband in order to be home more with the children. Alex, a developer, also has major board commitments, primarily related to environmental issues.

Sarah, a woman with a dignified bearing and the posture of a dancer, is no nonsense, with a dry wit. Her network of care includes her full-time nanny, her mother, her best friend, the mother of her son's best friend, her husband, and a babysitter who has worked for her approximately once a week for ten years. In mooring her network, Sarah has hired an absolutely top-notch babysitter and right-hand woman, and she goes to great lengths to keep her satisfied with her job by providing good pay and positive working conditions (including respect, autonomy, recognition, and appreciation). Sarah's mother, Jane Aldrich, covers cracks in the care-giving system rather than playing center stage, as does Patricia Crane's mother. However, like Dotti Crane, Sarah's mother works virtually full time, but in a position that does not easily accommodate the daily transportation needs of her grandchildren. Members of the Aldrich network pick children up from and drop them off at school, run them to lessons and games, babysit occasionally, and, in the case of Kate, Sarah's best friend, makes herself available to discuss the challenges and joys of child rearing. In addition to those people, Sarah has hired help to assist in running the household – a housekeeper two days a week, gardeners, and the like – but Sarah does not include them as part of her network of care. She describes herself as at the high end of the delegating work continuum.

For all this help, the glue of the system is April, the live-out nanny. April is a vivacious thirty-year-old women who picks the children up from school and shepherds them to their various extracurricular activities – primarily dance for Kimberly and sports for Jacob. She bounces around the house with the children, ponytail flopping, teases and tickles them, walks the dog, waters the plants, wraps packages, cuts flowers, plants bulbs, and runs a host of errands from making dental appointments to shopping for children's clothes. April said, "I'll do just about everything. My sister teases me and says, 'You know, you're like a wealthy housewife!'" April assures me that it is more profitable to be a nanny in their county than a teacher, whose average salary in 1998-1999 was $51,085 (California Department of Education 1999). Although

that is not true for all nannies, she implied that in her case it was, and her salary included retirement benefits, health insurance, and between two and three months of paid vacation per year.

Most importantly, in the midst of the separation between Alex and Sarah, April is the "stuff pony." That term is her way of describing her responsibility in transporting the children and their belongings back and forth between Sarah's and Alex's houses. The considerable family resources make it possible for them to buy double of many child necessities (winter coats, sporting equipment, computers). As April put it, "In a normal house, you could never do this." Essential items, as well as the children themselves, need to make the transition. April is in charge of these. In part because of her enormous planning responsibilities, and in larger part because of her solid, loving relationship with each of the children, April is indispensable in making this complex shared custody arrangement work. She anticipates needs in both households and acts as an advocate for the children. So, for example, on the morning of a day the children shift to Alex's, April will call Alex to ask what is in the refrigerator and shop for dinner that night, making sure there are bagels and orange juice for the children the next morning. She is key in minimizing the stress of transition and confrontation for all parties involved.

Like all families with working parents, the Aldriches feel the pinch of inadequate coverage at times, the pull between work and the needs of the children. Sarah Aldrich has effectively set up a network, using her considerable monetary resources and her skills as a loyal and dependable friend, to rear her children and to ease the tensions of a failing marriage.

Class Comparisons in Constructing Networks of Care

Network involvement exists across these case studies, although the expectations for network help received and given varies across the cases and class locations. In conceiving of class as a complex relationship of economic and social dimensions, I posit that experiences and ideologies are class linked, but not class determined. In addition to those aspects of life recognized as human capital, Garey (1999:53-54) enumerates other dimensions of resource constellations: racial/ethnic privilege, neighborhood context, relationship status, transportation options, family size and ages of children, and physical health. I recognize all these dimensions in

shaping experience, but in this research, I focus most particularly on the time, money, and people to which networks have access in varying degrees.

Clearly, networks are a major resource for rearing children. They are neither the product of deficits nor of privilege. Rather, networks evolve in a culture of expectations about what families should do, realizations about what their specific families *can* do, and understandings of the needs of their children in the context of parental work situations (Hunter 1997). As such, they play a role in reproducing class in the lives of children.

The literature on families has consistently shown reliance on extended kin and a cultural valuation of family ("familism") as more frequent among those of working-class, immigrant, African American, and Latino American origins. In this research, although friends are more often identified in the affluent middle- and upper-class networks, kin are present as central figures in each of the networks. Networks centered on caring for and about children would logically be more family linked than other kinds of networks. One could reasonably expect family members to be more interested in child rearing, given that its success means perpetuation of the clan, the family culture, and, in some cases, family property and historical legacy.

The Ideology of "Family First" versus "Family in the Last Instance"

The ideology of "family first" identifies family members as the preferred caretakers of children as well as those who are in trouble or sick. Family dominates the milieu in which lives unfold, providing a major point of reference.

I found all the networks in this study in privilege kin relations in raising their children. Although two of the networks do not adopt a "family first" approach, they do operate on a principle of "family in the last instance." From this perspective, although family members may not be the first called upon in an emergency, when all else fails, family is seen as a bedrock, the group of people who can be counted on to listen, to provide backup, to help. So, for example, when I asked people whom they identified on their children's earthquake emergency cards for school (such things are necessary in California), they invariably identified at least one family member. In the Duvall-Brennan network, where family ties are minimal and family help is

viewed with skepticism and ambivalence, in the terrible event that something should happen to both Maggie and Jack, their wills identify Jack's brother, Tom, as the guardian of their children.

The involvement of extended kin is shaped by beliefs about families and what families should do in the life of a child. The Cranes – the working-class family – expect family members to help raise the child. As Patricia Crane's brother, Ben, put it, "Families are real important. You'd have to pay for child care if you didn't have any family that would help you, and some people can't afford that. I know we can't (laughs). I know we can't, you know." In contrast, the upper-class Aldriches expect to pay someone to help rear their children. But nonetheless they both value family culture and legacy and expect their families to be involved in the lives and identities of their children. Their reliance on paid help in no way diminishes the importance of family.

When I asked Patricia Crane if there was any circumstance in which her brother would not help her, she replied, "No. No. Because his family comes first; that's what he says. He's told his boss, 'Anytime I get a phone call, my family comes first.'" Tracy, Patricia's friend, told about an exchange she had with Patricia about her drug-addicted mother, whom Tracy did not want around the children. "Patricia was like, 'Can't you just tell her no?' And I was like, 'Patricia, no. That's my mom.' It's so hard." Even though she was perfectly clear about not wanting her mother around her children, because her mother needed to eat, she could not turn her away. For this, Patricia got mad at Tracy, but she probably would have done the same thing had she been in her position.

The Beckers strongly and clearly articulated their privileging of family. Dina Becker said, "Family is like sort of our warm web of people." Her sister Jayme, put it even more strongly:

> People will say, like, at certain times, "After family, there's nothing." Or, you know, like, "Family is gonna be with you when you're at your deathbed." You know, with you when you die. So that's sort of why – or like, Lila will say to her kids, you know – "That's your sister. You need to look after your sister. You are her ally. You guys need to be good to each other." And so, those things are very strong in my family.

The Beckers' middle-class status is shaped by the strong family culture created by their parents and reinforced by Catholicism. Their vibrant network holds family at the core but extends its reach to neighbors, friends, and others in need.

The "family first" principle does not apply to the Duvall-Brennans or the Aldriches. Family is a safety net. The Duvall-Brennans feel that they have only Jack's brother, Tom, and his partner, Teri, as kin upon whom they can rely. Maggie Duvall did not include a single person from her family of origin in the network. This was not just because her family did not live close by (some lived within an hour's drive), but also because they were not interested in her children, because they did not share her child-rearing philosophy, and because Maggie was estranged from some of them. Similar issues face families of choice (Weston 1991).

The Aldrich family story differs dramatically. Sarah Aldrich's mother, Jane, regularly helps out with transportation to school, and her proximity to Sarah's house and school makes that relatively easy. Sarah does not rely on her sisters who live far away. Her working assumption is that April is on board to do whatever needs to be done – her job is to be on call – and when April is otherwise busy, she can ask Lydia, who is immersed in the same flurry of activities. That said, her reliance on nonkin does not mean family is not important. In fact, her extended family looms large in raising her children and in her professional life. Her immediate family and cousins have a "family office" that pools their resources and invests their money collectively. In addition to the semiannual family meetings that the family office organizes, it also hosts a "family life committee" that plans shared vacations and gatherings. For the past one hundred years, the extended family has vacationed together at a lakeside country estate – a place of great emotional power for Sarah, her siblings, and cousins, which has acted as the center of "family gravity."[19] The Aldrich legacy cannot be underestimated because of its power to inspire Sarah in her work. Sarah's grandmother in particular, is someone Sarah wishes to emulate. The family culture of service, which is part of the Aldrich legacy, greatly influences the values Sarah imparts to her children as well as how she has organized her professional life. In this upper-class context, the particulars of daily life and child rearing are something that can be delegated, to quality people, but values and a sense of identity are deeply tied to family and select friends.

Sarah's friend, Kate, who shares a similar background, is interesting on this issue. Although she has three brothers and two sisters who live nearby, she never calls on anyone for day-to-day help. But her extended family is extremely important to her. Despite the conflict and problems within the family, she thoroughly enjoys her extended family gatherings that happen

around birthdays and holidays. She loves the humor and laughter of the gatherings. She describes them: "There's tons of kids and quite a few grandkids. And it is really great. I mean, it's like really great. I mean, there's a lot of horrible stuff, but it's absolutely the best part of my family."

When they need help or advice, the Cranes and the Beckers call family first. Even with the Duvall-Brennans and the Aldriches, in the last instance, when other systems fail, family members can be called upon, are relied upon, and are expected to oblige in a way that friends could not. In all four networks, the question arose as to *which* kin members counted as part of the network and which did not, who could be counted on and who could not. Anchors turned to an array of friends, neighbors, and hired help.

Exclusion and Inclusion. Screening members – kin and nonkin – for networks of care is a long and subtle process. Through myriad ways, anchors strategically construct networks and test their commonalities with other potential caretakers – through their choice of where to live, with whom to associate, how to organize their work lives, what schools to send their children to, and the like.

The forces of exclusion are as powerful as those of inclusion. For example, during my first interview with Patricia Crane, the mother of her nextdoor neighbor, Tracy, knocked at the door. Patricia shooed her away, saying she had company. She then told me in a hushed voice that Tracy's mother was a heroin addict and they (meaning she and Tracy) tried to keep her away from the children. "We don't use her," Patricia told me. Subjects mentioned excluding people from their network because they were negative role models or lacked vigilance in regard to the food children ate. These exclusions and others narrowed the universe of potential network members.

Patricia's friend, Tracy, tells about her reasons for excluding one of her eight brothers from her network:

> I have another brother here; I'm not close to him. Actually, I can't even stand him. Neither can my other brothers, but he's my dad's son. I can't say that's the reason, because my little sister is my dad's daughter. But that doesn't mean a thing to me. I just can't stand him.
> *KVH: So you wouldn't think of asking him to take care of your children or help out in any way?*

No. Actually, he's greedy. He can eat two steaks, two pork chops, a skillet of potatoes, four eggs, and bread (laughs). And my children could stand there and watch him, and he would never offer them anything. Really, he's greedy.

Ryan Becker, Dina's brother, articulates the dilemma his brother faces as he considers his commitment to a girlfriend, who is not liked by much of the family:

And to be honest, my brother's dating a woman right now that the rest of my family really doesn't like at all. And I think he's gotta break up with her. It's a disaster. But one of the things I told him is, "Like, . . . what if Dina is not that excited about having her children hang out at your house with your wife?" I mean, to me that possibility is so frightening that that would be a reason to stop dating somebody.

In effect, Ryan is contemplating Dina's right to exclude someone, a potential family member, because she does not like her and would not trust her with the care of her children. So not only do the Beckers exclude some people from their network of care; they exclude some potential family members because of their inappropriateness for involvement in a network of care. Ryan knows that the depth of his brother's commitment to the family and his sense of entitlement to their nieces and nephews are so resolute that his own argument will be persuasive. At the same time, Ryan feels so strongly about the importance of family cohesion and network participation that he himself would not entertain serious involvement with someone his family does not like.

In a more extreme case, Patricia excludes the neighbor on the other side of her apartment, Luella, because Patricia sees how she treats her own children and hears their cries at night through the thin bedroom walls. "I don't trust her with my son. No, no, no no. Just the ways she talks to her children, I don't like it." She attributes Luella's incapacity to mental illness, something beyond her control except when moderated by the effects of medication.

The Aldriches face a similar issue, but frame it differently. They worry about the standards they set for their hired help. Sarah emphasizes "quality people," which expresses the same concern as Patricia Crane, but she phrases it in a different way. Luella can't be trusted because she lacks integrity and self-control. Sarah must screen people to hire without the information learned from living next door to someone. For inspiration, she recalls the example set by her grandmother:

So I'd say my experience with my own childhood was that the caregivers weren't really good, that my mom found for us. The woman at my grandmother's house was terrific. So that's a part of my—I think, what drives me. I really want to—I think children can have different relationships with lots of different people (it doesn't have to be their parents), but you do sort of have to have quality people for them to have relationships with.

Quality caregivers for her are capable, responsible, dependable, organized, high energy, and importantly, fun. In her quest to retain someone with a lot of energy and cultural capital, Sarah Aldrich puts resources behind her commitment. Obviously, millions of other families who also hire help with child care face the question of quality care as well, and the issue of expense looms large and may place quality out of reach.[20]

Shared Values: Chores, TV, and Food. A shared philosophy of child rearing emerges as another important dimension of constructing a network of care. Although it might seem obvious, the converse is also true: not sharing a child-rearing philosophy is grounds for excluding someone from the network. Most people within each network share a class position, but this did not necessarily mean sharing a child-rearing philosophy.

Patricia Crane discussed how she came to observe and evaluate Tracy's child-rearing philosophy and practices. When I asked her if she felt comfortable with the way Tracy treats Robbie, she said:

Oh, yes. That's why only my family and her watches them. Because I've seen how she takes care of her children, and that's what, and that's right in the line of mine. She comes home, they do their homework first, they do their chores, and that's exactly what I have Robbie on—doing his homework, doing his chores, like sweeping.

In the two middle-class networks, people articulated an anti-commercialism that served as a key sorting mechanism for those they considered incorporating into their networks of care.[21] Members of both middle-class networks expressed a strong concern about the amount of television American children watch and the excessive junk food they consume. They felt the need to fight consciously the influence of the dominant consumer culture. Positively stated, these cases point to an emphasis on healthfulness and a strong educational environment. Each of the Becker sisters who had children felt themselves part of a cultural minority in the context of their

children's schools. The extended family thus provided important psychological reinforcement for the parents and the children in warding off the influences of mass American culture. Lila Becker, Dina's sister who lives in the Pacific Northwest, said:

> Dina and Katalin do raise their children, in many ways, the same way. And I feel in some ways we're not like many of the people we know here. Just – our children watch less television, eat less junk food. They're just much less media oriented. We don't do quite as many sports. I mean, they do play some. . . . I think my children are a lot more like their cousins than many of their classmates.

In the support network for Dina and Mark, the aunts, uncles, and grandparents all reinforced the correctness of their approach and trusted each other to make similar decisions in similar situations. They reinforced their shared child rearing philosophy.

Similarly, the Duvall-Brennans felt strongly that children are at risk for health and behavioral problems as a result of their saturation in American consumer culture. Therefore, they do not own a television, and they carefully monitor the food intake of their children. These strong values were important elements of their child-rearing philosophy that allowed them to bond to Byron and Rebecca, the neighbors and friends with whom they used to share child care. In contrast to the Beckers, these same values led to conflict with their kin. Even Jack's brother, Tom, the family member closest to them, expressed disdain for their position on television. Tom felt the "no television" policy put children at a great disadvantage within the dominant culture. Thus, in their case, values similar to the Beckers led to an opposite outcome with extended kin.

Intentional Propinquity in Place and Time

In identifying those eligible and desirable to participate in rearing their children, anchors consider an additional two factors. The first has to do with propinquity – the person's geographic accessibility to the anchor's home and the radius of children's activities.[22] The second factor relates to the person's availability of time, which is necessarily linked to his/her employment and how s/he interprets that employment.

Constructing Place. Some kinds of activities are facilitated by the convenience of geographic proximity: play dates, impromptu visits, borrowing household items, caring for

someone on a moment's notice (Cochran et al. 1990; Hunter 1997; Hunts and Avery 1998; Logan and Spitze 1996). Dina's brother, Kent Becker, said: "I think being close geography-wise makes everything else easier." Most studies concur (Fischer 1982; Hofferth 1984; Logan and Spitze 1996; Rochelle 1997; Wellman 1999): physical distance or unavailability of time can create social and emotional distance and operate in a profound way in the lives of children and those who are trying to rear them.

Anchors in three of the four networks purposely determined where to live in order to be near some extended family member. I was struck when interviewing the Beckers by how much was possible because a critical mass of the family lives within a five-mile radius of one another. Their proximity to one another was not coincidental; it was intentional. Dina and Mark want to find a new place to live because they need more space than their two-bedroom home affords, particularly given Dina's home-based business. In the past year, Dina has looked at 170 houses in her search for the right one. In addition to the consideration of price range, she is bound by a desire to live within a small radius of her parents and siblings. Similarly, her brother, Kent, who is a firefighter, waited three years to get a placement in the same city rather than taking a job immediately available, but a thousand miles away. In the interim, he worked as a babysitter so he could live near his family and be involved in the network. His younger brother chose a graduate school in the same area instead of a prestigious East Coast school because, Ryan claims, his family helps him: "I felt like at the end of the day they would keep me sane and keep me having some perspective – being around my family. Even if it isn't as often as I would like."

This was true for the Cranes as well as the Beckers. Ben Crane follows his mother and sister wherever they go. He said, "We all try to stick around the same area because we all help each other that way, you know? . . . We don't have a lot of money, so there's some things that we need help with. And if we didn't have each other, we'd really be hurting."

In contrast, connecting becomes "a hassle," according to Dina Becker, if a relative or a friend lives far away. Distance can prevent relationships from developing, particularly with children. Alex Brolin talks about the distance from his brother, whom he really likes and wishes were more involved with his children. Sarah Aldrich says her sisters are not on call. "Never. They live too far." This contrasts to Jack Brennan who is very close to his sister who lives on the

East Coast. Although she is a central figure in his network, providing advice based on her years of child-rearing experience, the three-thousand miles that separate them mean she cannot be involved in the daily routines of caring for his children.

Another kind of distance exists – one that can be created through privacy. Here the class differences register more strongly. Sarah's mother, Jane Aldrich, talks about the barriers erected by the spatial arrangements of Sarah's affluent neighborhood:

> I think in an average, you know, less affluent area, you would have a neighbor you lived right next door to. And maybe, if you had to go somewhere, the neighbor would help out or be there. I think – you would have to hope there are neighbors like that.

As if to drive home the point, Sarah's friend, Kate, talked about her own childhood growing up in an elite family with the expectation of privacy. When I asked about her extended family's involvement, she said it was virtually nonexistent. When I asked about neighbors, she said, "[I] didn't grow up in that kind of class. No, upper class, . . . we barely knew our neighbors, although we did play on the street a lot growing up. But we weren't that kind, sort of thing."

In contrast, the Cranes had no such privacy or buffer zone – positive or negative – from their neighbors. Indeed, the walls that separated the apartments were shared walls, which meant that Patricia's bedroom was immediately adjacent to that of her abusive neighbor on one side and her living room wall provided the slight divide from the bedroom of her friend, Tracy on the other. Total privacy was out of the question. Regardless of whether or not it was desirable, it was unattainable. The lack of privacy meant that her neighbor's activities were her business. Even modest single-family dwellings can provide a cushion of space and privacy around a family.

Interpreting Time and Employment. Living next door makes no difference if one is neither culturally nor psychologically predisposed to involvement in a network. The organization of time and one's interpretation of the demands of employment, and how that shapes time, figures importantly in constructing networks of care for children. Some people interpret their work lives and schedules as being available to help friends, family, and young people; others see their lives as impossibly busy and themselves as unavailable. Not to deny the very real demands of work and long hours (Gerstel 2000; Schor 1992), but the key difference between those who

are available and those who are not, is not necessarily occupation (Hochschild 1989). Similarly, someone who is free during the week could see himself/herself as preoccupied with work and overwhelmed with his/her own life, unable to assist others or even be a part of a network of care.

Kent Becker is a good example of a person who views himself as available to help people in the family, even though he has a full-time job. His position as a firefighter is organized such that he works in blocks of time and then has several days off in a row. When he is off, he sees himself as on call to help out with neighbors who need to be taken to the airport or nephews who need to be babysat after school or his brother who does not have time to do his own banking. And his siblings and parents see his free time as a family resource and allocate it to friends in need.

Even with more traditionally structured hours, one's workplace can be more family friendly and responsive to employers' demands or to crises that pull employees homeward. Ben Crane, Patricia's brother who is in the tree-trimming business, said: "Yeah, my boss is pretty cool about things. I have quite a bit of flexibility. If I need to get something done, he'll let me go ahead and do it." Another case in point is Lydia, mother of Sarah and Alex's son's best friend, and friend to both parents, who, as director of development at a college, has a very different relationship to the labor market than Ben and yet shares an attitude. Lydia places boundaries around her work demands, and she sees herself as available to family and friends. Alex talked about her accessibility to the network of care for his children:

> She's the mother of three boys, three very active, involved, scheduled boys. And so she's used to massive amounts of orchestration and logistics, and she's also very flexible about you, . . . "Let me know. I'll just pick them up, or I'll drop Spencer off and make them play together. Or drop Jacob off at our house." It's easy to make arrangements. You know, she's not protective of her own – she's a wonderful facilitator of complicated schedules.

Time, in absolute terms, and in the way it is constructed and interpreted by members of networks, impacts participation in a network of care, across class.

People are constrained by the structures of their jobs and struggle to stretch and pull and shape them. Person after person talked about the importance of job flexibility in his/her ability to participate in a network (Gerstel 2000). However, they also went to great lengths to make their work situations compatible with their family lives. That may mean finding a job that pays

enough to support a family. Sometimes it means finding a job that has hours compatible with school schedules, some flexibility, and perhaps fewer demands on time otherwise spent on the second shift (see, for example, Garey 1999 on hospital workers).

An interesting difference emerges between the networks with different economic resources. Many of those in the middle-class networks chose their jobs so they could be more accommodating to the needs of children; some went so far as to prioritize job flexibility and location. Both Jack Brennan and Maggie Duvall had switched jobs to be in more family-friendly environments. Jack now works for a labor union, and Maggie has moved over to public sector law, which demands less overtime than private sector corporate law. But as attorneys and as commuters, both continue to have enormous and seemingly unyielding demands thrust upon them that made their days long, the burdens high, and their anxiety even higher.[23] Dina Becker set herself up as a freelance photographer so she could work around her husband's schedule as a teacher. While their children were small, this meant she could be with them during the day. Because they are now in school and Dina coordinates transportation, she sees them before and after school, but her work engages her most evenings and weekends.

Equally, if not more striking, members of the working-class and upper-class networks adamantly express the perspective that work arrangements are contingent on blending with family concerns and needs. They prioritize family commitments. And their identities and sense of their own place in the world are not dependent upon a particular job. Sarah and Lydia from the Aldrich network, and Patricia and Tracy from the Crane network, each told me that if their jobs did not suit their needs as mothers and family members, they would leave their jobs. Patricia told me:

> Well, I've always tried being in the labor force. But when [Robbie] was in the hospital for five days, I just took off. I says, 'My boy comes first.' . . . It's no problem, because I tell them right up front, you know. You know, when they hire me. You know, 'My son comes first.' You know, like, this incident with my mom, you know? I let my employer know, 'I've gotta go to the doctor's. I'm going to the doctor's with my mom all the time. You know, I might be late.' And they says, 'No problem.' You know? And then, when she ended up in the hospital, I called them and they didn't answer. Well, I called them back the next day and they answered. And I told them what had happened, you know? And they says, 'No problem. You take this time, and you come back whenever your mom's better.' I've been lucky.

When she and Alex separated, Sarah Aldrich cut her board commitments virtually in half so she could be home more when her children were home. In effect, she stepped down from four boards on which she had been active. Sarah's friend, Lydia, provides another example of how one constructs job flexibility and treats work as contingent. With three athletic teenagers, she has many sporting events to attend. As a director of development, she considers it a condition of her job that she be able to attend her children's games whenever she sees fit. She says that if those at her workplace did not accept that premise, she would find another job.

Now one could argue that Sarah and Lydia did not "need" to work and therefore had the luxury of leaving. This is true in a sense, but their resolve goes deeper than convenience or superficial interest. Lydia was prepared to quit if her paid employment did not fit her needs as mother. Sarah Aldrich did quit, *half* of her board positions, when her marriage foundered and she felt the need to spend more time with her children. On the working-class side, Patricia Crane quit both her jobs when her mother came home from the hospital and needed attention. Her safety net did not include a trust fund, although, in this instance, she got paid a small sum to care for her mother. In addition, her son receives Social Security because his father has a disability. So the state safety net, inadequate as it is, nonetheless provides some cushion that enables Patricia to know she could get by, even if she were not working for pay. Work is contingent. This was not something I heard from middle-class women, who were anxiously trying to accommodate – their work, their husbands, their family lives (Newman 1999).

Men did not offer up the same kind of family imperatives that trumped work, which is not surprising given the importance of breadwinning to conceptions of masculinity (Coltrane 1996; Faludi 2000; Gerson 1993; LaRossa 1997). Historically, men's commitment to their families has been demonstrated through wage earning (Townsend forthcoming). Nonetheless, the transformation of gender relations in the past thirty years has accompanied a shift in how men think about their families, how they relate to children, and for some, the degree to which they are attached to traditional workplaces and breadwinning (Faludi 2000; Gerson 1993; Potuchek 1997).

In this vein, the four central fathers in this study express a deep commitment to their children, and each has made changes in his work life to accommodate family life in some way.

Alex Brolin moved his office so he could be closer to home and the children's schools rather than commuting two hours each day. This makes it much easier to see his children and be involved in their activities. Jack Brennan works for a labor union and as head of his department; he can arrive at 9:30 or 10:00 and not be reprimanded. As a schoolteacher, Mark Walde has a job considered more compatible with rearing children. In addition, he has considerably reduced the number of hours he devotes to athletic training. He feels he has sacrificed a lot in order to be with his family. Robert Crane does not have a position in the formal labor force. Nonetheless he works as a mechanic and rearranges his life when Robbie is with him, and he tries to incorporate Robbie into his work by teaching him. In sum, each of these fathers has struggled with how to be effective family members and workers at the same time. They shaped the circumstances of their work, but, unlike the upper-class and working-class women, did not express a willingness to give it up. And the middle-class men, Jack Brennan and Mark Walde, spoke with some anxiety about not performing work at their optimal capacity. Both feel the internal pinch of knowing they could do more and better, but not if they are going to remain active in their children's lives.

Specialization and Expertise

Within the networks, although there is not an absolute division of labor, network members specialize in types of care and appear to be drawn into the network because of their skills (Wellman and Wortley 1990). The Beckers – the middle-class family – were the most explicit about this. Jayme Becker describes the operation:

> And that's how our system works. You know, everyone has their niche or their role or something like that. Or their area of expertise. I'm probably, like, the…the glue person in the family. But, like, you go to Kerry for certain things, to Kent for certain things. So there's a pecking order in terms of what kind of favor it is, who you would ask.

People across networks made distinctions between doing things, providing services (such as child minding), and giving advice. In the Becker family, everyone is college educated and has an elaborate array of skills to share – from children's literature, to photography, to natural history, to medical care. Kerry confirms this with her belief that no one could surpass her sister, Katalin, in the children's book category: "Would I *not* call Katalin before I would buy a

children's book? [KVH laughs.] I would never, like, in my life. . . ." And others in the family hold similar positions of esteem. Kerry speaks Spanish and translates documents to and from Spanish for family and friends. For bargain hunting, Dina's father, the designated price-shopper of the family, will be consulted. Dina's brother, Ryan, told me that, if anyone needed something done, they should call Kent. However, Kent was not someone skilled at listening to an upset person in crisis – for that, you had to call Deirdre. This system of skills is based on recognition and appreciation for what others in the network have to offer, including talents with children. The exchanges focusing on children immediately spilled over into other aspects of life so that a babysitting favor done for Dina could be repaid by Dina's arranging to have her brother drive someone to the airport.

The Aldrich network – the upper-class network **–** prizes managerial and executive skills. This is rooted in their class position and the way they organize their lives, which is very complex and involves coordinating many people, including hired help, car-poolers, and their children. Partly because the Aldrich children are a bit older – Kimberly is a teenager and Jacob a sixth grader **–** they face increased logistical challenges related to lessons and sporting events.

The estranged husband of Sarah, Alex Brolin, talked about several mothers of his children's friends who give sage advice, but at the top of his list is Lydia, the mother of his son's best friend. Alex describes Lydia as "a boy expert. And she's great, and she doesn't take any prisoners." Lydia confirms this about herself. She says she ought to have a web page called "asklydia.com." One of the great services she provides to Sarah and Alex, and to other friends, is coordinating and distributing car pool schedules. She is a part of several car pools (sports and schooling related), but she feels other mothers do not take the responsibility seriously enough (with the exception of Sarah), so she has taken it into her own hands. Two color-coded schedules were tacked on her wall at eye level near her desk so she could easily check them. A sufficient level of trust existed between Sarah, Lydia, and April, the nanny, that they rely on each other interchangeably for shopping needs. So Lydia could take the boys shopping for Halloween costumes and April could take them to buy navy blue blazers for their dance class. April also had the authority, for Jacob and Kimberly, to notice that it was time for dental checkups and to schedule their appointments.

Anchors and others had people they regularly relied upon in a crisis and those who helped them sort out a child-rearing challenge. For example, Patricia Crane could call on her next-door neighbor and close friend, Tracy, to help in any pinch. Because of specialization within the network, and because of the skills that people offer, some folks did not qualify to do some things. Patricia Crane said she would not think of asking her brother for advice – he is good at child care, playing with Robbie, being the "male role model" in his life, but advice is not his forte. For advice, Patricia relies on her Aunt Judy, who otherwise was not involved in the care for Robbie. But "because she works at a school," Aunt Judy had a perspective to lend that Patricia found helpful.

Jane Aldrich, Sarah's mother, speaks of what she describes as her own incompetence in mothering her daughters and how important her mother-in-law had been in providing advice, all the while not being judgmental. To her mother-in-law's great credit, she was non-interventionist, but on-call with wisdom to dispense. In fact, Sarah Aldrich, the eldest child of Jane, became a stalwart advice provider in the next generation for everyone in her family, including her mother. As a child, Sarah reported:

> My mother said I was completely the one who had to take care of everything, and that is the role I play in the family to this day. When you ask if I'm asking for advice, no. I'm giving it. I'm still the one who's the family board chair. People rely on me for my strength and can-do ability.

As evidence of her self-assessment, Sarah chairs the board that runs the family office that, among other things, invests the extended family's considerable financial portfolio.

The class contrast could not be greater between the kind of expertise prized by the Beckers and the Aldriches to that of the Cranes. The Crane expertise comes not in a college education or a managerial position, but from work experience in home health care. Patricia's mother, Dotti, talks about being anointed as the primary caregiver for her elderly mother who has Alzheimer's:

> Well, I didn't volunteer. But my sister came over. And I've always known that, when it came to anyone having to take care of Mother, it would have to be [me], because nobody else—I've taken care of people that's been sick, you know? And I've always been the one that when anybody's sick, they always call on me to come stay with them [laughs], so I always knew that it was just gonna be me. I didn't volunteer, but it's my duty. You know?

Patricia's schedule is complex, and was especially so while she was working two jobs, but she had only one small child at home and was able to keep track of everything in her head. In contrast, other families kept "the book," a family calendar, or a palm pilot (see Lareau 2000, for an elaborate discussion of schedules).

Concluding Questions

Because of the structures and demands of employment and the organization of schooling, care for school-aged children remains a challenge. For each of these networks I have studied, the primary system of care is seldom sufficient. This means that networks are essential to the children's well-being, to the anchor's child-rearing project, and to the anchor's sense of herself/himself as a proficient parent. People want help and they want networks to assist them with their child rearing because help creates a safer and healthier environment for the children as well as the parents.[24] Anchors go to elaborate lengths to screen and recruit people to help them, thoughtfully and strategically constructing networks of care.

In summarizing the insights of this study, there are three points I want to emphasize. First, when studying families, researchers must situate them within their context – of paid caregivers and neighbors and friends and kin. Networks provide essential emotional and practical support for working parents. This means that even when children are in school and child care full-time, working parents are dependent upon friends, family, paid caregivers, and neighbors. The assumptions of the two-parent model predominate in social science and influence the way research questions are framed, sometimes missing a family's embeddedness in networks and kin relations. Sociological studies of child rearing that focus exclusively on nuclear families, assuming they are isolated, may be missing a great deal of what is happening. Those portraits of the isolated nuclear families, so gripping in the U.S. cultural imagination, inadequately capture of ebb and flow of people in and out of children's lives.

Second, methodological approaches to the study of networks shape their findings. Had this study approached this particular set of forty people with a quantitative orientation, it would have come to very different conclusions. On the face of things, given the tally of network members in Table 1, one could conclude that the Cranes have the fewest members in their

network and the Duvall-Brennans have the most. These findings would be largely consistent with the extant national studies that say the higher up the income and education scale, the more robust the network, the more sharing takes place. (The Aldriches would not have been included in the study.) However, an in-depth, qualitative examination of these networks, reveals that the Duvall-Brennan network is thin, brittle, and "inadequate" and the Crane network is highly functioning.

Three, theoretically and methodologically, broadening the class categories of analysis deepens our understanding of the curious and unique middle. My strategy of comparing an upper-class and a working-class network to two middle-class networks throws the middle class into relief. Through this comparison, similarities between the upper class and working class emerge, and the anxious middle stands out as a comparative anomaly, rather than the norm. The economic anxiety experienced by the anchors in these two networks is not of their own making. Nor is their anxiety about child rearing. Both the Beckers and the Duvall-Brennans have some resources to fall back on – the Beckers have family and all the richness their resourcefulness provides, and the Duvall-Brennans have some economic resources (in the form of their house) and high earning potential. Although both families own homes, they are scrambling to hold onto their place in the economic order. The extended Becker clan helps keep Dina and Mark afloat and their marriage cemented. The Duvall-Brennans largely feel they are doing it alone. They have locked themselves into professional obligations and hold high expectations for themselves and their children. The exigencies of their lives and careers have moved them away from the base of their families of origin. And the families that live within a two-hour radius of their home are, with one exception, estranged from them culturally and philosophically in relation to child-rearing values.

Ultimately, parents are primarily responsible for their children – legally and culturally. They have some agency in the choices they make about raising their children. Through myriad ways, anchors strategically construct networks and test their commonalities with other potential caretakers – through their choice of where to live given their means, who they recruit into their network, how much energy they commit to being part of a network, and what kind of job to accept.

More importantly, parents also are constrained by structural forces beyond their control – how well the economy is doing, what jobs are available, how much education they were able to achieve given the early education they received, and the like. And, no one has control over which family of origin s/he is born or adopted into – its beliefs, capacities, resources, or personalities. Maggie Duvall did not include a single person from her family of origin in her network. This was not just because they did not live close by, but also because they were not interested in her children, because they did not share her child-rearing philosophy, and because Maggie was estranged from some of them. Within these structures, people make calculated bargains with themselves and with life. The Duvall- Brennans traded good neighbors for a good school. They also traded higher paying jobs for less demanding jobs in order to have more time with their children. The Beckers traded time with each other for time with the children, a choice made possible by family support.

Class contingencies influence the choices parents can make in rearing their children; they shape the contours of the networks parents call upon to help. In comparing cases, I found many similarities in the level of the division of labor. However, as illustrated in the previous examples, I found a great deal of difference in the *kinds* of expertise network members brought to bear on the project of rearing children. Those differences are fundamentally affected by the contingencies of class location.

With four case studies, it is not possible to claim that class location alone is responsible for the observed behavior and attitudes of people in these caregiving networks. However, there appears to be clarity of vision on the top and the bottom of the economic spectrum about one's place in society, the real resources available, and the importance of family.

Notes

1. Roschelle (1997: xi-xii) defines familistic as "attitudes, values, and beliefs that give primacy to the family over the individual."

2. Researchers attributed the class variation to either social structure or culture, depending on their theoretical orientation (Roschelle 1997). Those taking the structural-economic approach argued that relative scarcity in resources led poorer people to share what they had (Wilson 1987; Zinn 1990). Those taking the cultural perspective argued that, for historical and cultural reasons, minority families in the U.S. (primarily African American and Latino) were much more family oriented and more likely to be involved with extended kin and live in extended households (e.g., Hays and Mindel 1973).

A notable exception to this privileging of the nuclear family and its insularity can be found in Barrett and McIntosh (1982).

3. I find it fascinating that, in addition to the transformation in findings, there is an accompanying revaluation of network involvement. No longer are extended domestic networks treated as a pathology, an aberrant phenomenon that needs to be explained, but rather something that is normative for the middle class, something associated with relative privilege. The end result, however, is that poor, working-class, and racial/ethnic communities continue to be seen as aberrant, but now by a new standard, one in which they had previously been the standard bearers. For additional evidence, I point to the growing literature on the "commodification" of care work. Researchers are now more worried about the exchange of money for services than they were thirty years ago. I wonder if this is a kind Martha Stewart effect in sociology. When time comes to be seen as more scarce than it was, then time-consuming tasks (such as being involved in networks of care) come to be more associated with privilege and more highly valued.
Roschelle (1997) finds class a more important predictor than ethnicity – which adds ammunition to the structural approach.

4. And, Roschelle (1997:81) adds that a disproportionate number of the studies "examine poverty populations in isolation."

5. People in this study also use institutions – such as school-based after-school care and day care centers. However, there are numerous studies that closely examine the kinds of care those institutions provide and the caretakers' relationships with parents and children (Macdonald 1998; Nelson 1989; Uttal 1998). And because I am interested in the operation of *informal* networks, I have opted not to focus on them.

6. Network studies refer to the center of the network as "ego" or as "focal person." Because I find both those terms inadequate, I have used a term that better reflects the centrality of the parent in *constructing* a crew of people to care for the child/children. Had I begun my interviews with another member of a network, the network would look different because it is unusual for two people to have completely overlapping networks. In a sense, my selection of one person with whom to start was arbitrary.

7. As previous research and reviews of the literature show (e.g., Marshall et al. 2001; Roschelle 1997), the conflation of class and race in these network studies confounds their findings. And studies that attempt to be comparative mix too many features of the communities to allow for systematic comparison.

8. The study of social networks of various kinds has become a small industry within sociology and has spawned a journal, *Social Networks*, focusing exclusively on this topic.

9. Many different definitions of network are used, depending on the purposes of the study. So, for example, McCallister and Fischer (1978:135) define a "core network" as "the set of people who are most likely to be sources of a variety of rewarding interactions, such as discussing a personal problem, borrowing money, or social recreation." As a result, the networks emerge as rather large. In contrast, Belle (1982:136) defines a social network as a "list of important others," and the average size is seven to eight people. Stack (1974:31) defines a "domestic network" as the smallest, organized "durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily to provide domestic needs of children, assuring their survival."
Hogan et al. (1990:801) create a variable for "support network": "For this variable a mother is counted as participating in a support network if she (a) lives in an extended family situation (with one or more adult kin other than a husband; (b) receives half or more of her incomes from someone other than her husband; or (c) gets unpaid childcare." This definition relies on receipt of support and ignores all the other dimensions of support given to families, even within the range of child rearing and child care. And there are many more definitions, which vary by the framing of the research question in each particular study.

10. Fischer (1982) found that parents with children at home are among those most likely to be involved with their neighbors.

11. More theoretically consistent, Wright (1987, 1994) centers his definition of class on exploitation. Therefore jobs become important insofar as workers are exploited, in the Marxist sense of the word.

12. These criteria are deeply biased toward white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who have held wealth for several generations (Baltzell 1979, 1991). Jews were excluded from the *Social Register* from its founding in 1888, as were other "minority" groups. Women have always been a central part of the *Social Register* (unlike other institutions that consider themselves gatekeepers of something or other) because it is a listing of families. Baltzell (1991:30, emphasis added) argues that the very essence of upper-class status "refers to a group of *families*, descendants of successful individuals (elite members) one, two, three, or more generations ago, who are at the top of the social (subjective) class hierarchy."
Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1998) write about the degree to which women and minorities of various kinds – religious and ethnic – have more recently been absorbed into the upper-class institutions (especially clubs and schools).

13. Arlie Hochschild coined this phrase. It aptly captures what Newman (1999) describes about middle-class life in the 1990s, where people feel "a peculiar combination of consumer confidence and employment anxiety" and "oscillate between optimism and worry" (p. 246).

14. Definitions of the middle class vary widely. Waite (2000) defines it in several ways in her research on working families. Her most inclusive definition includes all those who have a household income of $30,000 or more, in other words, the demographic middle. The most selective definition she uses is that at least one spouse has a minimum of one year of college education. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (1999) defines "affluent" middle class as those families whose income was over $75,000 in 1996, which amounts to approximately 17% of the population of families with children. Using a different approach, Wolfe (1998) talks about the middle class as a mentalite, a set of values held by the majority of the U.S. public. Zweig (2000) differs from the demographers in this regard and claims that, according to his definition, the working classes constitutes the majority (70%) of the U.S. population. He relies on yet another, but age old definition – relationship to the means of production.

15. Newman (1999:15) refers to this group, the managers and professionals, as the "occupational cream" of the middle class.

16. For children in elementary school, there is a growing number of "out of school time" options provided at their schools (Bundy 1998). The quality, staffing, cost, and availability of out of school programs vary widely across the county.

17. However, the degree to which these factors have impact is debated in the literature. For example, Hunts and Avery (1998:327) find "none of the variables measuring child characteristics, time, or financial resources of the family were significant in explaining the use of a relative for child care in the sample."

18. In his study of Northern California, Fischer (1982) finds that 62% of kin live more than five minutes away. In this way, as in their large family size, the Beckers are demographically unusual.

19. This is another feature of upper-class life that parallels that of the working classes. Baltzell (1991:99) says, "The core of any upper class is, of course, the family, especially of the extended or consanguine variety, which includes not only parents and children but also grandparents, extended cousinages, and ancestors."

20. Research shows that the highest quality care is provided to children at the highest and lowest ends of the income spectrum (Roschelle 1997). At the high end are people, like the Aldriches, who can afford to pay for child care expertise and provide positive working conditions. At the low end are people who send their children to government programs such as Head Start that set high standards because they have a social agenda and are regulated, which many of the family day care centers are not.

21. This is a point in the research where it makes a big difference that the interviews were conducted with people in the San Francisco Bay Area rather than somewhere else. However counter cultural their comments might seem, they inform a discussion of middle-class values. And the point that these anchors articulate a principle upon which they include and exclude people is consistent with other observations about middle-class child rearing (Macdonald 1998), even if the specific principle varies.

22. Research consistently finds the importance of proximity in constructing networks and activating extended kinship systems (Wellman 1999; White and Reidmann 1992). My findings dovetail, but they also reveal that propinquity is not a simple fact; it reveals intention. Some kin systems exert sufficient "family gravity" to pull others toward them, not as a "natural" process, but as a socially constructed relationship that results from intention and action as well as coincidence.

23. There is an important distinction between jobs and careers. Hertz (1986:5) discusses careers as positions that offer a "realistic expectation of upward occupational and financial mobility" along with "advancement from lower to higher levels of responsibility, authority, and reward." She makes the point that a vast majority of women are employed in jobs, not careers. In this case, the Duvall- Brennans are both in high-powered careers. In contrast, Mark Walde and Dina Becker are both professionally trained and in careers, but not with the same external demands on them.

24. Although this was universally accepted as true among the people I interviewed, there were aspects of network life that people eschewed in practice. For example, some did not like car pools, some did not trust others to adhere to their parenting philosophy, and some got involved in a babysitting co-op and then decided it was more work than it was worth. Lots of research has been done on this question of the well-being of children when other adults are involved in their lives (e.g., Marshall et al. 2001). The findings consistently point to the positive outcomes for children and parents when others are involved.

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Notes

1. Roschelle (1997: xi-xii) defines familistic as "attitudes, values, and beliefs that give primacy to the family over the individual."

2. Researchers attributed the class variation to either social structure or culture, depending on their theoretical orientation (Roschelle 1997). Those taking the structural-economic approach argued that relative scarcity in resources led poorer people to share what they had (Wilson 1987; Zinn 1990). Those taking the cultural perspective argued that, for historical and cultural reasons, minority families in the U.S. (primarily African American and Latino) were much more family oriented and more likely to be involved with extended kin and live in extended households (e.g., Hays and Mindel 1973).

A notable exception to this privileging of the nuclear family and its insularity can be found in Barrett and McIntosh (1982).

3. I find it fascinating that, in addition to the transformation in findings, there is an accompanying revaluation of network involvement. No longer are extended domestic networks treated as a pathology, an aberrant phenomenon that needs to be explained, but rather something that is normative for the middle class, something associated with relative privilege. The end result, however, is that poor, working-class, and racial/ethnic communities continue to be seen as aberrant, but now by a new standard, one in which they had previously been the standard bearers.

For additional evidence, I point to the growing literature on the "commodification" of care work. Researchers are now more worried about the exchange of money for services than they were thirty years ago. I wonder if this is a kind Martha Stewart effect in sociology. When time comes to be seen as more scarce than it was, then time-consuming tasks (such as being involved in networks of care) come to be more associated with privilege and more highly valued. Roschelle (1997) finds class a more important predictor than ethnicity – which adds ammunition to the structural approach.

4. And, Roschelle (1997:81) adds that a disproportionate number of the studies "examine poverty populations in isolation."

5. People in this study also use institutions – such as school-based after-school care and day care centers. However, there are numerous studies that closely examine the kinds of care those institutions provide and the caretakers' relationships with parents and children (Macdonald 1998; Nelson 1989; Uttal 1998). And because I am interested in the operation of *informal* networks, I have opted not to focus on them.

6. Network studies refer to the center of the network as "ego" or as "focal person." Because I find both those terms inadequate, I have used a term that better reflects the centrality of the parent in *constructing* a crew of people to care for the child/children. Had I begun my interviews with another member of a network, the network would look different because it is

unusual for two people to have completely overlapping networks. In a sense, my selection of one person with whom to start was arbitrary.

7. As previous research and reviews of the literature show (e.g., Marshall et al. 2001; Roschelle 1997), the conflation of class and race in these network studies confounds their findings. And studies that attempt to be comparative mix too many features of the communities to allow for systematic comparison.

8. The study of social networks of various kinds has become a small industry within sociology and has spawned a journal, *Social Networks*, focusing exclusively on this topic.

9. Many different definitions of network are used, depending on the purposes of the study. So, for example, McCallister and Fischer (1978:135) define a "core network" as "the set of people who are most likely to be sources of a variety of rewarding interactions, such as discussing a personal problem, borrowing money, or social recreation." As a result, the networks emerge as rather large. In contrast, Belle (1982:136) defines a social network as a "list of important others," and the average size is seven to eight people. Stack (1974:31) defines a "domestic network" as the smallest, organized "durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily to provide domestic needs of children, assuring their survival."
Hogan et al. (1990:801) create a variable for "support network": "For this variable a mother is counted as participating in a support network if she (a) lives in an extended family situation (with one or more adult kin other than a husband; (b) receives half or more of her incomes from someone other than her husband; or (c) gets unpaid childcare." This definition relies on receipt of support and ignores all the other dimensions of support given to families, even within the range of child rearing and child care. And there are many more definitions, which vary by the framing of the research question in each particular study.

10. Fischer (1982) found that parents with children at home are among those most likely to be involved with their neighbors.

11. More theoretically consistent, Wright (1987, 1994) centers his definition of class on exploitation. Therefore jobs become important insofar as workers are exploited, in the Marxist sense of the word.

12. These criteria are deeply biased toward white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who have held wealth for several generations (Baltzell 1979, 1991). Jews were excluded from the *Social Register* from its founding in 1888, as were other "minority" groups. Women have always been a central part of the *Social Register* (unlike other institutions that consider themselves gatekeepers of something or other) because it is a listing of families. Baltzell (1991:30, emphasis added) argues that the very essence of upper-class status "refers to a group of *families*, descendants of successful individuals (elite members) one, two, three, or more generations ago, who are at the top of the social (subjective) class hierarchy."

Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (1998) write about the degree to which women and minorities of various kinds – religious and ethnic – have more recently been absorbed into the upper-class institutions (especially clubs and schools).

13. Arlie Hochschild coined this phrase. It aptly captures what Newman (1999) describes about middle-class life in the 1990s, where people feel "a peculiar combination of consumer confidence and employment anxiety" and "oscillate between optimism and worry" (p. 246).

14. Definitions of the middle class vary widely. Waite (2000) defines it in several ways in her research on working families. Her most inclusive definition includes all those who have a household income of $30,000 or more, in other words, the demographic middle. The most selective definition she uses is that at least one spouse has a minimum of one year of college education. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (1999) defines "affluent" middle class as those families whose income was over $75,000 in 1996, which amounts to approximately 17% of the population of families with children.
Using a different approach, Wolfe (1998) talks about the middle class as a mentalite, a set of values held by the majority of the U.S. public.
Zweig (2000) differs from the demographers in this regard and claims that, according to his definition, the working classes constitutes the majority (70%) of the U.S. population. He relies on yet another, but age old definition – relationship to the means of production.

15. Newman (1999:15) refers to this group, the managers and professionals, as the "occupational cream" of the middle class.

16. For children in elementary school, there is a growing number of "out of school time" options provided at their schools (Bundy 1998). The quality, staffing, cost, and availability of out of school programs vary widely across the county.

17. However, the degree to which these factors have impact is debated in the literature. For example, Hunts and Avery (1998:327) find "none of the variables measuring child characteristics, time, or financial resources of the family were significant in explaining the use of a relative for child care in the sample."

18. In his study of Northern California, Fischer (1982) finds that 62% of kin live more than five minutes away. In this way, as in their large family size, the Beckers are demographically unusual.

19. This is another feature of upper-class life that parallels that of the working classes. Baltzell (1991:99) says, "The core of any upper class is, of course, the family, especially of the extended or consanguine variety, which includes not only parents and children but also grandparents, extended cousinages, and ancestors."

20. Research shows that the highest quality care is provided to children at the highest and lowest ends of the income spectrum (Roschelle 1997). At the high end are people, like the

Aldriches, who can afford to pay for child care expertise and provide positive working conditions. At the low end are people who send their children to government programs such as Head Start that set high standards because they have a social agenda and are regulated, which many of the family day care centers are not.

21. This is a point in the research where it makes a big difference that the interviews were conducted with people in the San Francisco Bay Area rather than somewhere else. However counter cultural their comments might seem, they inform a discussion of middle-class values. And the point that these anchors articulate a principle upon which they include and exclude people is consistent with other observations about middle-class child rearing (Macdonald 1998), even if the specific principle varies.

22. Research consistently finds the importance of proximity in constructing networks and activating extended kinship systems (Wellman 1999; White and Reidmann 1992). My findings dovetail, but they also reveal that propinquity is not a simple fact; it reveals intention. Some kin systems exert sufficient "family gravity" to pull others toward them, not as a "natural" process, but as a socially constructed relationship that results from intention and action as well as coincidence.

23. There is an important distinction between jobs and careers. Hertz (1986:5) discusses careers as positions that offer a "realistic expectation of upward occupational and financial mobility" along with "advancement from lower to higher levels of responsibility, authority, and reward." She makes the point that a vast majority of women are employed in jobs, not careers. In this case, the Duvall-Brennans are both in high-powered careers. In contrast, Mark Walde and Dina Becker are both professionally trained and in careers, but not with the same external demands on them.

24. Although this was universally accepted as true among the people I interviewed, there were aspects of network life that people eschewed in practice. For example, some did not like car pools, some did not trust others to adhere to their parenting philosophy, and some got involved in a babysitting co-op and then decided it was more work than it was worth. Lots of research has been done on this question of the well-being of children when other adults are involved in their lives (e.g., Marshall et al. 2001). The findings consistently point to the positive outcomes for children and parents when others are involved.