

Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research 5

Martina Richter  
Sabine Andresen  
*Editors*

# The Politicization of Parenthood

Shifting Private and Public  
Responsibilities in Education and  
Child Rearing

 Springer

# The Politicization of Parenthood

# Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research Series

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## Volume 5

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Martina Richter • Sabine Andresen  
Editors

# The Politicization of Parenthood

Shifting Private and Public Responsibilities  
in Education and Child Rearing

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# Introduction

Sabine Andresen and Martina Richter

Parenthood has become a focus of political attention throughout our modern welfare-state societies. As economic resources become more limited, attention is shifting toward how families may contribute to the development of society as a whole and the duties they have to fulfill when rearing their children. Frequently, particular doubt is cast upon the parental competencies of families of low socioeconomic status, with the greatest concern addressing the behavior of single parent mothers or unemployed fathers. However, policymakers and the media always focus on individual behavior, thereby masking the social and, above all, the economic framing conditions of parental failure and lack of well-being.

Nonetheless, the situation of families and the well-being of children and adolescents also depend decisively on how the educational and social institutions respond to inequalities and whether they are capable of improving the life situation of those who are less privileged. Hence, what is decisive is the relation between public and familial responsibility for well-being along with the socially determined fit between both family lifestyles and child-rearing styles and institutional expectations. This brings us to the topics addressed in the present book “*The Politicization of Parenthood: Shifting Private and Public Responsibilities in Education and Child Rearing.*”

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The book brings together contributions from different countries and different disciplines. It is based on an international conference held at Bielefeld University on “Mapping Families: Practices and Concepts of Children, Parents, and Professionals in All-Day Schools.” This conference was financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, not only because the introduction of all-day schools in Germany has transformed the relation between families and a nationally reorganized education system, but also because policymakers are also interested in international comparisons—particularly since PISA.

The editors of this book have carried out their own comprehensive qualitative empirical study on families as actors in Germany’s all-day schools. Their findings point to several central problems in the processes this involves. One particular question guided the project: How do different concepts and fields of responsibility contribute to a rearrangement and reassessment of families?

After 15-year-olds in Germany had performed so poorly in the PISA comparisons, German policymakers turned away from the traditional morning-only organization of schooling and started promoting an all-day school system with a federal program known as the *Initiative Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung* [Future initiative for education and care]. This is pursuing two political goals, although providing no guarantees for their successful implementation:

1. Easing the work–life balance, that is, allowing women to take up employment.
2. Creating equal opportunities for children from families with a low socioeconomic status and poor qualifications. This group contains many families with a migration background.

Because Germany’s federal system requires each single federal state to decide on the content, structure, and curriculum of its own all-day school model with the national government having no say in this, the school landscape now shows a great variety of structures 10 years after the initiation of the program. Nonetheless, two features are almost universal:

- In almost every state, parents (and children) can choose to use an all-day provision at their child’s school or to keep their child at home in the afternoon. In other words, all-day schooling is voluntary. This leads to a separation between obligatory morning lessons for all children and extracurricular education and care provisions in the afternoon, thus making a regular all-day school impossible.
- There is little coordination between the professional groups involved—teachers, childcare workers, social workers, and volunteers. In Germany, teachers belong to the education system, whereas childcare workers and social workers belong to the social welfare system. Both systems follow their own principles, and this impedes any collaboration in organizing this type of school in a way that grants recognition to all groups involved. The outcome for parents is that they cannot be sure about who is responsible for what.

With respect to the German case, we have two leading questions: How is this organized in other countries? How is the relation between voluntary offers and obligatory institutional settings?

One central determinant of the relation between the family and educational institutions, as between the family and the labor market, is gender relations and the accompanying gender-specific divisions of labor and responsibility. This is also one of the topics in the latest book by the French philosopher Elisabeth Badinter, *Le Conflit, la femme et la mère* [Conflict: The Woman and the Mother] (2010). It has triggered a major controversy in Germany, just like her earlier work *L'Amour en plus* [Mother Love: Myth and Reality] (1980). In *Le Conflit*, Badinter makes us more aware of the moral dictate of the image of the perfect mother. She analyzes how the “naturalistic offensive” in recent years has once again contributed to placing endless demands on mothers and, to remain in Badinter’s framework, to subordinating the needs of the woman to those of the mother. We can see a mélange of attachment theory, new ecology, or old natural law and conservative feminism, strengthened by the economic crisis that particularly throws poorly qualified women out of the labor market—all joining together to promote the picture of the self-sacrificing mother.

Can we agree with this diagnosis? Whatever the case, the continuous expansion of all-day schools in Germany, for example, just like the gradual growth in the number of crèche places, is helping women with toddlers and elementary school children to be not just mothers but to pursue other careers as well. However, a key question in any cultural analysis is: What are the real decision-making and action options that result from this? How far are the individual mothers and fathers—and also children—able to make their own choices for their own good reasons?

Examining families always means examining them in their national contexts; their framing conditions in terms of social, familial, and labor market policy; and the freedoms granted to individual family members. This is a field for international and interdisciplinary research. If we want to map families, their internal dynamics, and their external networks in, for example, the childcare and education system or the nursing care system, in the neighborhood and community, on the labor market, or in the system of political parties and associations, we have to analyze the perspectives of the actors, their concepts and practices, their aspirations, but also their feelings of guilt. Badinter’s reconstruction shows us clearly how we possess at least formally granted freedoms, but that family life is a negotiation process that has to consider competing interests and seek ways of maintaining some kind of balance. Whose interests carry more weight and have more chances of being asserted, and when and why this is the case depend strongly on the dominant relation between the genders, and this is always constrained by social conditions. However, both the generational balance of power between children and adults as well as the power divide between families and educational institutions play a major role in this. Gender, social origins, and power are accordingly coordinates of an international cartography of families. This casts light on those interfaces that are particularly relevant for children as they grow up: interfaces between families and institutions, between ideas on “good childcare” and “good child raising” among adult actors, but also interfaces between families and public institutions and decisive market interests. Both the market and politics focus particularly strongly on families, and it is not chance alone that makes them the topic of so many modernization-oriented and critical narratives of cultural decline.



One helpful perspective on this topic is to conceptualize the interaction between familial and school perspectives in terms of cultural fit (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1973). Initially introduced in the 1970s to analyze education and equal opportunity, this concept has recently regained popularity in both German-language and international discourses (Betz 2008; Büchner and Brake 2006; Ecarius and Wahl 2009; Helsper and Hummrich 2008; Jünger 2008; Lareau 2003; Vincent and Ball 2006). It provides an analytical access to the adaptability and connectivity of family and school as locations of education that is simultaneously sensitive to inequality issues.

Proceeding from the concept of cultural fit, family theory could focus on the question of family images and concepts of responsibility. Recent studies have indicated that despite the transformation processes in society, the traditional nuclear family continues to exert a powerful influence. This orientation toward the traditional, intact two-generation family with its complementary, gender-typical division of labor can be interpreted as a hegemonic family model that is still retained today (Churchill 2011, p. 53). Empirical studies reveal that paternal identities remain strongly tied to the status of the primary breadwinner, and the image of the full-time, stay-at-home mother remains “a normative reference point” for good motherhood in several European countries, North America, and Australia. However, mothers and fathers are urged not only to fulfill their traditional responsibilities but also to match the “universal adult worker, nurturing mother, and involved father” ideals (Churchill 2011, p. 53; see also Daly 2004; Maher and Saugeres 2007).

For families, sticking to this male breadwinner/female carer family model (Daly and Rake 2003, p. 139) and its attendant social norms and expectations—particularly regarding the division of labor between the genders—creates paradoxes in everyday life and family management, because it broadly contradicts contemporary family realities.

At this point, it is necessary to ask whether such a hegemonic family model continues to be so effective within the context of educational or social reforms such as the all-day school reform process, or whether change is making it necessary to assume a juxtaposition of diverging and competing family models. Initially, it could be assumed that the ideas and images of “family” not only in the families themselves, but also and particularly among professionals, will no longer follow the traditional pattern. However, our findings from the German project deliver indications to the contrary: It seems as if the hegemonic family model and the accompanying normative expectations regarding relations between the genders do not just continue to be effective in the families, but that it is particularly the professionals who retain the model of the traditional family. This is indicated by the finding that the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the reasons why a family decides to take advantage of the all-day provision is a decisive issue for professionals. They frequently continue to assume that, ideally, children are best looked after at home in the afternoons, and that afternoon schooling is neither necessary nor meaningful for a properly functioning family that is able to look after its children itself. The all-day school, in contrast, is considered to be particularly suitable for children who require supervision and help with their homework in the afternoon and would otherwise be left to fend for themselves alone in the family home.

However, hegemonic family images do not prevent exclusions or shifts in the borders of areas of responsibility. Indeed, the opposite is the case. They generate controversies and a lack of clarity regarding who is responsible for which tasks in which form. This issue of the distribution of tasks and areas of responsibility between the family and the institutions addresses the attributions and adoptions of responsibility by families, teachers, childcare workers, and politicians. The task dimensions of “care,” “child-rearing,” and “education” and the responsibilities for individual learning processes or homework (see Ecarius and Wahl 2009; Jünger 2008; Kolbe et al. 2009; Lareau 2003; Züchner 2009) are important aspects within the politicization of families (see also Ellingsaeter and Leira 2006). This makes it all the more important to reconstruct the different “senses of responsibility” in different societies (Vincent and Ball 2006).

The present book links up systematically to these issues and presents the current state of research and discussion on the basis of different national trends and international discussions. It is divided into three parts: The first addresses “Families and the Welfare State: The Understanding of Responsibility” and thereby a broader perspective on the politicization of the family and on societal and welfare-state concepts of responsibility. The second part of the book, “Child Rearing Between Family Care and Institutional Provisions,” focuses on how the actors perceive the different ratios in the mixture of familial care and extrafamilial provisions. This does not just cast light on central categories of difference such as social class, gender, and migration background. It also reveals which different levels of action are relevant and which concepts are generated within the discourse on, for example, what constitutes a “good childhood.” The third part, “Meeting Parents’ and Children’s Needs: Professionals in Schools,” focuses particularly on the challenges of compulsory schooling and the time- and content-related integration of children into daily school life. These chapters address the fit between the school and the needs of both parents and children.

Part I, “Families and the Welfare State: The Understanding of Responsibility,” contains seven chapters: In her chapter “Family Policy and the Politics of Parenting: From Function to Competence,” Val Gillies (London) critically discusses the moral constructions of family and shows how the focus of policy has shifted in Great Britain. Poverty of parenting is being used increasingly to explain social problem states. As a result, not only policymakers but also the mass media allocate responsibility exclusively to the parents. Nadia Kutscher’s (Cologne) chapter “Families, Professionals, and Responsibility” relates to this and reflects on the discursive practices and political strategies in response to the declining birthrates in many countries. Kutscher accordingly discusses responsibility in light of a diagnosis of “demographic panic.”

Anne Lise Ellingsaeter’s (Oslo) chapter “Nordic Politicization of Parenthood: Unfolding Hybridization?” addresses the state’s attempts to politicize the family. It presents a systematic study of the historical background and the effects of Scandinavian family policy designed to promote dual earner/dual carer family models. She concludes that the well-being and care of the youngest of children is currently a central “battlefield” in most European countries.

Brid Featherstone's (Milton Keynes) chapter "Can a Crisis Become an Opportunity? Gender and Care in Contemporary Ireland" takes up the challenge of analyzing the current crisis on the financial markets and the drastic consequences this is having for Ireland. She comes to a theoretically systematic conclusion on the need to reconsider an earlier feminist discourse, namely, that on the political ethic of care. In contrast, Kristen D. Nawrotzki's (Heidelberg/London) chapter on "Parent-School Relations in England and the USA: Partnership, Problematized" reveals interesting parallels, but also marked differences between England and the United States. She shows the way in which educational inequality has become a benchmark for national politics, and she critically discusses the demand for parental involvement—a demand on parents that is also addressed by Elke Wild and Sittipan Yotyodying in Part II and studied empirically by, among others, Michael Urban, Kapriel Meser, and Rolf Werning in Part III.

In his chapter "Family and Welfare State Change: Challenges for Education," Andreas Lange (Ravensburg-Weingarten) concentrates on the question how and why child-rearing has become a central issue for political actors in modern societies. He analyzes the tension arising between the assumption that child-rearing and education are central resources and a situation, particularly in Germany, in which the education system reveals major deficits in delivering these resources. Part I closes with the chapter from Nina Oelkers (Vechta) on "The Redistribution of Responsibility Between State and Parents: Family in the Context of Post-Welfare-State Transformation." She applies a welfare theory perspective on the attribution and addressing of responsibility that reveals the stress this triggers for families, thereby reconstructing the effect of calls for activation.

Part II "Child Rearing Between Family Care and Institutional Provisions" brings together six chapters starting with a chapter based on discourse theory from Tanja Betz (Frankfurt/Main) on "Early Childhood Education and Social Inequality: Parental Models of a 'Good' Childhood." She studies parents' concepts of childhood in the interplay between early childhood and social inequality. The author then reports findings from a large-scale research project on which ideas of a "good childhood" are frequently used to guide policy, and she analyzes the effects these have in terms of generating inequality. Colette McAuley (Dublin) also addresses issues in childhood studies, but her chapter "Child Well-Being in the UK: Children's Views of Families" studies the perspectives of the children themselves. This addresses a central actor perspective that is closely linked to the concept of subjective well-being. She shows the major relevance of what families contribute to the well-being of their children on different dimensions such as relationships, time use, health, or the satisfaction of material needs.

In their chapter "The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes," Carol Vincent, Nicola Rollock, Stephen Ball, and David Gillborn (all from London) report systematically on their research into family work with the educated child (making up the middle-class child). They show which child-rearing strategies are applied in Black middle-class families, how they are applied, and why. This perspective permits a differentiated analysis of the aforementioned cultural fit between families and institutions. The chapter from Jutta Ecarius (Cologne) on "Significance

of Family and School, Educational Standards, and Social Reproduction in Education” can be read as a continuation of this theme. She applies Bourdieu’s habitus concept to study the dimensions of social reproduction, the patterns of family transmission in a private space of possibilities, and the reproduction strategies of the education system. She focuses on families as locations of child-rearing and education and examines the mismatch between family habitus and institutional expectations.

Elke Wild and Sittipan Yotyodying’s (both from Bielefeld) chapter examines the returns to parental involvement. “Studying at Home: With Whom and in Which Way? Homework Practices and Conflicts in the Family” draws on empirical research to call for multidimensional conceptualizations of parent involvement. They use their study of homework practices in Germany to formulate five dimensions of the quality of school-based home instruction that include parental conceptions of responsibility and parental role conceptions.

Part II closes with Christine Hunner-Kreisel’s (Bielefeld) chapter on “‘Having to Keep Silent’: A Capabilities Perspective on Growing Up and the ‘Education Process’ in a Migration Family.” This chapter is based on the theoretical framework of the capability approach that has also been used to conceptualize well-being. The author applies it to the issue of how the migration context influences the shaping of child-rearing processes.

Part III “Meeting Parents’ and Children’s Needs: Professionals in Schools” addresses the overarching issue of well-being and the relation between families and schools from the perspective of the needs of the actors. It contains eight chapters and starts with Erin McNamara Horvat’s (Philadelphia) “Pushing Parents Away: The Role of District Bureaucracy in an Urban School.” This presents the findings of an ethnographic study and analyzes the difficulties this reveals for parents trying to cope with bureaucratic obstacles and procedures that lack transparency. She shows how neighborhood factors, school factors, and parents’ motivations interact and undermine the parental school selection process. A further ethnographic study is that reported by Till-Sebastian Idel (Bremen), Kerstin Rabenstein (Göttingen), and Sabine Reh (Berlin) in their chapter on “Symbolic Constructions, Pedagogical Practices, and the Legitimation of All-Day Schooling from a Professional Perspective: Tendencies Towards Familialization in All-Day Schools.” Proceeding from the historical context of the formation of the nuclear family and public education in Germany and a systems theory inquiry into the functionality of institutions, they present findings on the transformation of school practices, with a particular emphasis on how family practices are gaining entry into the school.

The next chapters focus decisively on the school reform process in Germany since PISA, although they also pose more far-reaching questions that can be applied for comparisons from an international perspective. Nicole Börner’s (Dortmund) chapter “Parents’ Perspectives on Services to Support Families in All-Day Schools” asks how the reforms in the services provided in the school context can support families. She bases her study on interviews with parents whose children attend voluntary all-day schools as well as parents whose children do not attend voluntary all-day schools.

In “Parental Involvement in All-Day Special Schools for Learning Disabilities,” Michael Urban (Bielefeld), Kapriel Meser (Bielefeld), and Rolf Werning (Hanover) survey the specific challenges facing special education and suggest that in many cases, professionals view the all-day school as providing a better family for the children (colonialization of the family lifeworld). Based on interviews with parents, they deliver highly informative analyses of how parents are addressed and how parental involvement is integrated into school activities and the self-image of professionals. Regina Soremski’s (Gießen) chapter “Educational or Child-Rearing Partnerships: What Kind of Cooperation Is Needed at All-Day Secondary Schools?” also asks about parental involvement, but, in this case, in secondary schools, and she supplements this with an analysis of the newly forming concept of an education and child-rearing partnership. The question that emerges is whether and how such a partnership can be possible in light of the asymmetric balance of power between parents and the school.

Natalie Fischer and Felix Brümmer (both from Frankfurt/Main) adopt a completely new perspective in their chapter “School Attachment and Performance: The Impact of Participation in Extracurricular Activities at School” by asking how special provisions within the school impact on learning processes and outcomes. These provisions, which also contribute decisively to the quality of a school, are the options available for children and adolescents to participate in extracurricular activities. The authors emphasize that such activities can exert a positive influence on the school climate as well as on the students’ attitude toward and commitment to the school.

Ivo Züchner (Frankfurt/Main) introduces his chapter “Daily School Time, Workforce Participation, and Family Life: Time Spent in School as a Condition of Family Life,” with an idea from legal philosophy. This is because compulsory schooling and the children’s right to receive education and training through the school place principal constraints on family and school life. He analyzes the relation between school time for children, working hours of women, and family life, thereby once again linking up with the idea of responsibilities in both labor market policy and welfare policy.

Part III ends with the chapter “Ideas of Family and Concepts of Responsibility at All-Day Schools” from Sabine Andresen (Frankfurt/Main), Lena Blumenkamp (Cologne), Nicole Koch (Duisburg-Essen), Martina Richter (Vechta), Anne-Dorothee Wolf (Bielefeld), and Kathrin Wrobel (Bielefeld) that reports on the research project “Familien als Akteure in der Ganztagsgrundschule” [Families as actors in the all-day elementary school]. Based on their empirical findings, the authors link up systematically with the question raised in this book on the shift in the understanding of responsibility on the side of the families and on the side of the professionals representing the educational institutions. This brings us back once again to the meaning of the images of a “good family” and a “good childhood” that were already reconstructed by Tanja Betz in Part II.

The context of shifting borders between the family and the welfare state and social and pedagogical institutions reveals major areas of tension that refer particularly to two aspects: the significance of the different parties’ understanding of the family or ideas of family in their interactions, and the way they allocate tasks and

obligations to themselves and the others with the accompanying calls for the others to honor their responsibilities.

We hope that this collection of chapters will contribute to the discussion on the significance of families for the entire growing up process and the well-being of children and adolescents. We also wish to engage in a critical discourse on the way the welfare state applies attributions to certain families and family members that often function on the basis of guilt and shame, and we wish to redefine responsibility and open it up for discussion.

The end of this introduction is the place for us to express our gratitude to all our contributors and expressly thank Bettina Bundszus and Dr. Petra Gruner from the BMBF in Berlin for their support and their generous funding of the conference. We thank Asher Ben-Arieh for the opportunity to publish the book in the “Children’s Well-Being: Indicators and Research Series” and thereby locate it within the international context of research on well-being. We also thank the team at Springer for their support and their suggestions for the title of the book.

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**Part I**  
**Families and the Welfare State:**  
**The Understanding of Responsibility**



# Family Policy and the Politics of Parenting: From Function to Competence

Val Gillies

Recent years have seen governments prioritize family as a mechanism for tackling social ills. As a result, some of the most significant social changes of late have taken place within the arena of family policy, with huge consequences for families themselves. Governments have increasingly come to see families more in terms of their practices than structures and have targeted policy interventions accordingly. Reflecting an increasing professionalization of family relationships, emphasis has been placed on the need for all parents to have access to support, advice, and guidance. In this chapter, I discuss how dominant moral constructions of family have shifted away from concerns with function and structure to embrace a new policy-centred orthodoxy of “competence.” I begin by outlining how in the UK, parenting was pushed to the centre stage of the social policy curriculum in line with a neoliberal emphasis on family, community, and personal responsibility (Gillies 2005, 2007). More specifically, the advent of the New Labour government in 1997 marked a distinct attempt to reposition family life as a public rather than a private concern.

In the past, intimate family relationships have tended to be viewed and represented as personal and outside the remit of state intervention. This boundary has now been challenged in an explicit and determined effort to mould and regulate individual subjectivity and citizenship at the level of the family. Parenting is no longer accepted by the British state to be a relational bond characterized by love and care. Instead, it has been reframed as a job requiring particular skills and expertise that should be taught by formally qualified professionals. A consequence of this reframing of family life is a new evaluative focus on family practices articulated

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through a discourse of proficiency or “competence.” By way of evidencing this claim, I shall briefly explore some key, interrelated ways in which public understandings and expectations of family and child rearing have meaningfully shifted in a relatively short time span. The changes I discuss here relate specifically to a UK context, but similar trends can be identified in other EU nations as well as in the USA and Australia. I shall also seek to illustrate the gender- and class-specific implications of such changes to show how they work in particular to problematize and regulate mothering practices in poor households.

## The Politics of Parenting

Whereas families have long been a source of concern for politicians, in the UK, the last 15 years or so have seen an explicit focus on parenting as a designated area of policy intervention (Gillies 2007). On winning electoral success in 1997, the New Labour government pledged to put parenting practice at the heart of the policy agenda in line with stated commitments to “support families” and tackle “social exclusion.” Changes in contemporary family relationships and a decline in traditional values of duty and responsibility were posed as making good parenting increasingly more difficult:

Parenting is probably the most important task any of us will undertake, yet it comes with no instructions or training. As more is known about children’s needs, so parents’ aspirations and uncertainties grow about how to care for and educate their children. At the same time, changing patterns of work and the breakdown of networks of family and friends, increased divorce and re-partnering rates, all combine to add to the complexities and pressures of parenting and family life. (UK government funded telephone helpline *Parentline Plus*, cited in Edwards and Gillies 2004, p. 629)

This perspective highlights increases in cohabitation, divorce and separation, lone parenting, and people living alone as evidence that isolation and individual self-interest have intensified at the expense of principles of responsibility and obligation. The values and identities associated with family life are regarded as having been undermined, thereby weakening social ties and damaging societal cohesion more generally.

While ostensibly distancing themselves from punitive family policies associated with previous Conservative governments, New Labour developed a social democratic critique of individualism, borrowing from the work of communitarian philosophers such as John Macmurray (1995) and Amitai Etzioni (1994). According to this doctrine, social cohesion is a key component of economic and personal well-being. However, a prevailing “me-first” mentality is undermining the cooperation and reciprocity necessary to sustain strong families and communities. In order to address this perceived threat, this “third way” philosophy aimed to balance individual rights with social responsibility through a contingent emphasis on both liberty and personal obligation. In pursuing this apparently contradictory aim, moralistic ideals of obligation, duty, and family values are stressed alongside principles

associated with Anthony Giddens' (1998) and Ulrich Beck's (1997) claims about the inevitability of change and the democratization of personal relationships. This translates into a seemingly paradoxical desire to reinforce the traditional family while simultaneously encouraging negotiation and choice (Deacon and Mann 1997). However, as close analysis of New Labour family policy shows, these opposing principles formed the basis for a new kind of interventionism characterized by explicit and implicit attempts to control and regulate the conduct of families.

Over their 15-year rule, a whole panoply of interventions were implemented by New Labour with the intention of advising and guiding parents. The result was a major expansion of state-sponsored and third-sector initiatives directly targeting families under the rubric of "parenting support." In the wake of the global financial crisis and a subsequent change of government in 2010, significant cuts were made to the public funding of such services, but the principle of family intervention as a core policy tool has remained strong, characterized by cross-party political consensus. In the context of the serious financial challenges facing the British economy, there is general agreement that in order to tackle social problems, the state must take greater responsibility for fostering and enforcing the practice of good parenting. This broad policy framework has led to some remarkable and rapid changes in the ways family is now represented, understood, and lived.

## **Public–Private Boundaries**

A particularly notable yet underdiscussed change in the meanings attached to family relates to the ways in which the UK governments have successfully redrawn cultural conceptualizations of family boundaries. During the last 15 years, the state has presided over a remarkably aggressive attempt to reposition family life as a public rather than a private concern. Prior to the first New Labour government in 1997, legislation and sensibilities positioned everyday personal and family life as largely outside the remit of state intervention. This view is now consistently and explicitly challenged through a moral focus on children as the most important constituents of family life. In policy literature and public debates, the minutiae of everyday family and parenting practices are now systematically linked to "outcomes" for the child using psychologically informed cause and effect models. The focus is resolutely directed towards the significance of home and family life in determining future success, and away from structural and economic factors. It is widely claimed that to address inequality and its negative social consequences, child rearing must be repositioned as a public rather than a private concern, and that the state must take responsibility for fostering and enforcing the practice of good parenting. For example, the Conservative-led coalition government came to power in 2010 and soon after commissioned a review into child poverty that concluded:

We have found overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those

crucial years that together matter more to children than money in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life. The things that matter most are a healthy pregnancy; good maternal mental health; secure bonding with the child; love and responsiveness of parents along with clear boundaries, as well as opportunities for a child's cognitive, language and social and emotional development. (Field 2010, p. 5)

Recommendations from the report included more intensive intervention from pregnancy and through the early years of a child's life, focusing on the poorest families in particular. In a simultaneous review into the early intervention as a policy approach, it was asserted that:

Early Intervention is an approach which offers our country a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long-term savings in public spending. It covers a range of tried and tested policies for the first three years of children's lives to give them the essential social and emotional security they need for the rest of their lives. It also includes a range of well-established policies for when they are older which leave children ready to face the challenges of each stage of childhood and of passage into adulthood—especially the challenge of becoming good parents to their own children. (Allen 2011, p. vii)

The extent to which public policy has been consistently pursuing a highly interventionist agenda in relation to family and parenting has been well documented (Furedi 2008; Lind and Keating 2008). Notably, this challenge to public–private divisions encompasses organizations and institutions as well as families. For example, legislation championing “family-friendly” policies in the workplace has been introduced forcing employers to facilitate caring responsibilities through provision of flexible working and unpaid leave, while institutions and services are routinely encouraged to consider the needs of families. To some extent, this has built on and extended long-standing maternity and paternity rights enshrined in law.

A clearer and more striking example of this transformation in the construction of state/family relations concerns the semipermeable boundaries that are now expected to be maintained between family homes and schools. Whereas education was once viewed very separately from family care, the domains of the teacher and parent have become far less distinct in recent years. Parental involvement in a child's education is now presented as an essential practice, alongside an expectation that opportunities for educational development in the home will consistently be provided. As Maryellen Schaub (2010) notes of the US context, parents have become increasingly involved in activities designed to aid their children's cognitive development, to the extent that it has now become a normative practice. In the UK, this relatively new parental duty has been explicitly set out in government policy documents. Schools have been encouraged to draw up contractual style “Home School Agreements” that both parents and teachers are expected to sign. These documents can specify the exact nature of the educational input that is required from home, detailing, for example, the number of hours parents are expected to read to children and the written feedback that must be passed back to the teacher. Home School Agreements were originally introduced by a New Labour government, and proposals were drawn up with a view to making them legally enforceable before the change of office in 2010. They remain common practice in British schools.

Whereas parents have additional pedagogic responsibilities, UK schools have been charged with a range of duties more traditionally associated with family practices. These changes were enacted through several legislative and policy developments, most notably the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) framework, introduced through the Children Act 2004. This legislation expanded the remit of schools beyond that of educating to encompass child and family welfare imposed through a legal duty to recognize and safeguard vulnerable children on their register. Teachers are now expected to work with a range of professionals to monitor children's development and intervene where necessary. Yet, as many commentators have pointed out, the focus of this concern does not extend to addressing the pervasive and engrained structural inequality driving outcomes for children (Hoyle 2008; Simon and Ward 2010). Whereas social and economic disadvantage is articulated in terms of risk, ECM focuses instead on "protective" interpersonal factors such as strong parent-child relations, parental involvement with education, availability of appropriate role models, and self-esteem.

Changes to school curriculums have also underlined the new responsibilities accorded to teachers in securing the appropriate development of their pupils.

A nationwide schools initiative, termed *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL), is currently operating at primary and secondary levels in British schools, with the aim of providing "a whole-curriculum framework and resource for teaching social, emotional and behavioural skills to all pupils" (Department for Education and Skills 2005, p. 12). As a result, teachers are now expected to address personal and relational aspects of pupils' lives without recourse to parents. Activities aimed at developing "emotional literacy" are built into the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. Pupils are also taught how to negotiate and manage social relationships with peers, family members, and other adults.

## The Rise of "Parenting"

This legislative and cultural blurring of the boundary between public and private reflects a fundamental change in the meaning and significance that has subsequently become attached to the term "parent." Drawing on a historical analysis comparing archived interviews from British community studies conducted in the 1960s with contemporary accounts of family reveals some dramatic differences in the understandings of child rearing over this time period (see Gillies and Edwards 2011). In the 1960s, "parenting" was not a commonly used term. Instead, "parents" described themselves as mothers or fathers and viewed this in terms of an ascribed relationship or identity. In contemporary times, the word parent has taken on a whole new significance as a verb. Mothers and fathers now "parent" children, and this task is loaded with moral and practical consequences. Current perspectives tightly tie the well-being of society (and that of individual children) to family practices and the particular parenting techniques pursued. A crucial feature of this change is a reframing of child rearing as a job requiring particular know-how and aptitude.

Policymakers have sought to establish parenting as a complex skill that must be learnt. “Knowledge” about child rearing is now portrayed as a necessary resource that parents need to access in order to fulfil their moral duty as good parents.

Christina Hardyment (2007) has documented the long history of child-rearing advice and manuals and shown how they have reflected often widely diverging philosophies. However, recent times have seen the emergence of a whole new industry and matching workforce with the aim of promoting “good parenting.” The notion that there could and should be consensus over what counts as good parenting is regularly justified through reference to scientific evidence. For example, longitudinal surveys following large numbers of children across time, such as the Millennium Cohort Study,<sup>1</sup> are often cited as evidence that middle-class values and practices correlate with positive outcomes and life chances. In 2007, the publicly funded National Academy for Parenting Practitioners was set up in the UK with a remit to provide “evidence-based” training for parenting professionals. The major focus of the Academy was on the delivery of parenting classes that detail, amongst other things, how to play with children, praise them appropriately, handle misbehaviour, and develop their educational potential. Whereas the NAPP eventually became a casualty of public sector cuts, its legacy was a general acceptance amongst policymakers and practitioners that parenting can and should be taught as a technical expertise.

Working-class parents in particular have felt the sharp end of this policy preoccupation with parenting. For those identified as the “deeply excluded” in the UK, parenting intervention is not optional. Policy documents state that these parents should be offered support but note it is also incumbent on them to take this support. Those who fail to accept such interventions are viewed as morally compromised and warranting of ever greater use of compulsion such as fines and imprisonment. In the UK, interventions designed to force certain parents to attend classes and adhere to particular rules have been developed and expanded through a range of legislative acts. Much of the impetus behind this approach derives from an explicit linking of “antisocial behaviour” and public disorder to parenting deficits. Without help, poor parents are seen as destined to transmit their cultural deficits, thereby sustaining crime and disadvantage through an intergenerational “cycle of deprivation” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004). In pursuing this reasoning, parenting interventions are targeted towards the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society in order to “save” the next generation.

This approach was pioneered by past New Labour governments but has been embraced enthusiastically by an incoming Conservative-led coalition government in 2010. In a speech on social mobility, the UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has explicitly claimed that “parenting not poverty shapes a child’s destiny,” declaring “we must not remain silent on what is an enormously important issue. Parents hold the fortunes of the children they bring into this world in their hands. All parents

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/text.asp?section=000100020001](http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/text.asp?section=000100020001) for details.

have a responsibility to nurture the potential in their children” (Clegg 2010). The Prime Minister adopts a similar line of reasoning, pledging to alleviate “poverty of parenting” to help children escape material disadvantage:

What matters most to a child’s life chances is not the wealth of their upbringing but the warmth of their parenting. As Stephen Scott of the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners has said: “Poverty is a factor, but not a central one. It seems to be poverty of the parent–child experience that leads to poor child outcomes rather than poverty of a material kind.” Now, of course it can and should be argued that it is easier to achieve good parenting when there is material prosperity but the findings in the study seem so significant that they should help us to settle a fierce debate that has been raging for decades about how we build a fairer society. (Cameron 2010a)

Carefully worded references to “parenting” in political rhetoric and social policy documents belie the fact that responsibility for the day-to-day care of children still falls predominantly to mothers. This gender-neutral language also obscures the differential impact of policy initiatives on mothers and fathers. While fathers are increasingly being targeted in an attempt to involve them more productively in child rearing, they tend to be viewed as requiring separate specialist services specifically designed for “fathers” rather than parents (Gillies 2009). Meanwhile, mothers continue to bear most of the responsibility and sanctions when generic accusations of poor parenting are made (Gillies 2010; Holt 2009).

## **The Centring of Children’s “Well-Being”**

The moral impetus behind the changes I have discussed so far relates in the main to a contemporary emphasis on children and their psychological well-being. Parenting interventions provide the key measures against which family competence is measured, drawing on a “children’s needs” discourse to warrant their input. Current interpretations of children’s needs are closely tied to those of the neoliberal state through an instrumental investment in parenting. Parent–child interactions are accorded a causal status in isolation from other family and social relationships and with little reference to their environmental and economic circumstances. An intensive approach to child rearing is advised in the best interests of the child to inculcate the personal skills, traits, and qualifications required in adult life (Lareau 2003).

Current concerns over child well-being reflect a broader policy shift away from structures and processes towards a focus on mental health, personal skills, and self-efficacy. From this perspective, the state should facilitate the production of resourceful, agentic, ethically responsible, and emotionally competent citizens. Individualistic, Western values prioritizing autonomy, choice, and democracy have been similarly embraced as part of a broad take up of a discourse of “children’s rights,” for example, through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The convention requires that individual state signatories act in the best interests of the child. The UK ratified the treaty in 1991, although this pledge has managed to sideline high rates of child poverty, family homelessness,

and record numbers of children in custody and focus instead on improving children's sense of well-being through the targeting of the family or, more specifically, parents.

A crucial element of this centring of children's well-being is an increasing preoccupation with risk and protection (Furedi 2008). While equated with universality and naturalness, the normal development of a child is also presented as a fragile achievement requiring specific forms of stimulation and careful shielding from stress and negative influences. Recent concerns over children's safety in public and private spaces, alongside fears of dangerous children themselves, have been particularly prominent (Walkerdine 2005). The introduction of the *Every Child Matters* framework in 2004 saw a particular emphasis on the monitoring of children's development and the sharing of information across services and institutions. As David Hoyle (2008) notes, this directly undermined any notion of a child or young person's entitlement to privacy, contradicting the values associated with a rights-based perspective:

[Every Child Matters] has drawn a range of practitioners (including many informal educators) into the formal surveillance process. There has been a fundamental cost to this. Children and young people are being denied spaces to explore feelings, experiences and worries away from the gaze of the state. A visit by a child or young person to a third sector advice agency, for example, to talk about sexual activity can quickly trigger police intervention.

Despite generating many contradictions and tensions, the principle of safeguarding children was emerging as a central motif of the UK politics by the turn of the century, guiding and justifying a range of policy initiatives developed by New Labour administrations. Various programmes were introduced in an attempt to regulate children's interactions with adults, with, for example, a "National Vetting and Barring" scheme set up in 2009 to assess the suitability (or otherwise) of those working with children. Whereas the more libertarian instincts of the incoming Conservative-led coalition limited the scope of such a regulatory approach, the home life of children is still subject to scrutiny in the context of social disadvantage. Emphasis has been placed on the prior identification of potentially harmful family relationships to be addressed through ever earlier intervention. For example, an initiative currently operating across the UK identifies unborn babies at risk of future social exclusion on the basis of their mother's background. Nurses are then allocated to these mothers, as early as 16 weeks into their pregnancy, to train them in parenting skills. Inherited from the previous New Labour administration, this programme has since been expanded and forms a key plank of the current government's strategy to address poverty and inequality.

## The Targeting of Family Practices

The foregrounding of well-being largely positions children as passive "selves in the making," but they are also increasingly being appropriated as active agents in a more general targeting of family practices by governments. As part of the new



concern with family competence, particular aspects of domestic life have become highly politicized and evaluated in terms of right or wrong, healthy or unhealthy. Family diet, leisure practices, and relationship dynamics, alongside energy use within the home, are now areas through which competence, skill, and moral worth are judged explicitly. Children are actively drawn into this process via school projects and even direct television advertising. For example, some schools require children to keep an online health and lifestyle diary. Children are encouraged to reflect on their diets and leisure-time activities in order to identify “targets” for change, thereby challenging and reshaping family routines. Also, there has been a deliberate aiming of public information-style television adverts at children. For example, one publicly funded ad screened in 2009 adopted the format of a bedtime story to convey the serious consequences of global warming. Child viewers were implicitly encouraged to question their parents about the actions that they can take as family to reduce their carbon footprint (see, for more details, Gillies 2011).

Just as parenting has apparently transmogrified from a relationship- to a goal-oriented practice, so other family and personal ties are being similarly reframed and targeted by governments. For example, couple relationships are now increasingly viewed as requiring intervention either to preserve them or manage their dissolution. Emphasis is placed on preventative “relationship education” in the UK schools delivered as part of a personal, social, and health education curriculum. Registry offices also provide preliminary “marriage preparation” advice before they conduct the ceremony. The notion that relationships require the application of particular knowledge and skills has also been extended to a whole variety of family roles. Couple counselling organizations have widened their remit and now provide services to a diverse range of families and family members. For example, *Relate*, an organization previously known as the Marriage Guidance Council, now targets same-sex couples, single people, children and young people, and families.

Governments have expressed a particularly strong interest in the idea of relationship support. In Australia, 65 “Family Relationship Centres” were set up in major population centres across the country to provide “all families (whether together or separated) with access to information about family relationship issues, ranging from building better relationships to dispute resolution.”<sup>2</sup> They preside over an extensive and detailed website divided into separate sections for children, teenagers, parents, couples, and grandparents, and contain advice such as “10 steps you can take to maximise your relationships so that you feel valued, loved and nurtured, and to minimise becoming a relationship casualty.” Information can be downloaded on a wide range of issues including how to become a better partner, manage conflict, and parent well after separation.

Inspired by this Australian initiative, the British Conservative-led coalition government has also sought to invest in strengthening family relationships, dedicating

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/>

£30m funding over 4 years to provide counselling and relationship support. As the British Prime Minister explained in a speech to the couple counselling organization *Relate*, the intention is to go further than previous administrations:

The last Government concentrated its family support on children.... But it also meant they shied away from saying anything meaningful about the family as a whole—and in particular, the vital relationships within a family: the ones between parent and child and parent and parent. All the evidence also shows that the strength and stability of adult relationships are vital to the well-being of children. If the relationship is strong, then the adults are more likely to support each other through whatever challenges they face—including approaching parenting with confidence. And if they are confident parents, then their children are more likely to succeed. (Cameron 2010b)

In line with this focus on the technical management of family relationships, particular family-based events are also now commonly viewed and evaluated in terms of competence and appropriate behaviours. Childbirth, for example, is singled out as a precarious event carrying risks and opportunities for couples. Relationship “experts” offer advice and interventions to help parents exploit this “magic moment” and to promote family stability (One Plus One 2006). Other events are also regarded as presenting hazards for untrained families, with guidance issued on how to cope with family festivals like Christmas (Neil 2008).

More mundane, everyday practices such as the consumption of food have similarly been identified as key measures of family proficiency, chiefly through the valorization of family mealtimes around a table. For example, the parenting advice website *Supernanny* contains the following assertions, complete with “tips on getting started”:

The family environment is one of the strongest determinants of dietary behaviour—expressed through a parent’s belief in what food is good or bad for a child. Parents also influence a child’s exposure to certain foods as well as where the food is eaten, i.e. at the table, or in front of the television. But if there are no family meals, and everyone is eating alone in their rooms or in front of the television, how do children learn these important dietary habits? The truth is, they don’t.... Children need routines in their lives, they actually thrive on routines which makes them feel secure and loved. Regular meal times all together (regardless of whether you are eating a pizza or a freshly cooked roast dinner) give children the opportunity to discuss their little problems with family members; it relaxes them and encourages them to unwind from their day. They become better friends with their siblings and learn to respect others around the table. Talking to your children over dinner is the best way of gaining their trust. (Wake 2008)

In the context of this contemporary focus on parenting and children’s well-being, what families do inside and outside the home readily translates into markers of perceived failure or success, with activities such as takeaway consumption, watching television, and playing computer games contrasted unfavourably with home cooking, visits to museums, and engagement with school and after-school activities.

## Naming and Shaming Families

This judgemental approach to family and relationship practices is powerfully underscored by a drive to expose, learn from, and often punish those deemed incompetent. The past demonization of lone mothers has been well documented

(Duncan and Edwards 1999), but this goes beyond a fixation with family structure and instead focuses on explicit content. Contemporary perspectives appear to place less emphasis on the break-up and diversification of families and instead focus on greater anxiety about the quality and management of relationships and family practices. Contemporary depictions of “bad” families in the UK are extensive and span a cultural range, including reality TV programmes, TV dramas and comedies, and biographical fiction. These representations tend to hone in and detail the damaged and damaging consequences of defective family practices, generating an implicit and sometimes explicit moral commentary (see Gillies 2011).

“Reality television,” a format following the experiences of everyday members of the public, is a particularly popular genre in the UK with the programme *Supernanny* amongst the most watched. The show depicts hapless parents struggling to manage defiant, badly behaved children and has been broadcast or adapted for screening in a wide range of countries worldwide. The programme’s style is pedagogic and follows a distinct moral narrative. The parents appearing on *Supernanny* are shown to “redeem” themselves through education and training, with *Supernanny* providing step-by-step advice on what they are doing wrong. *Supernanny*, as a brand, also runs an interactive website for parents allowing access to advice, a forum to discuss experiences, and the opportunity to shop for children’s products alongside application forms to appear on the programme.

Other representations of “incompetent families” seek to exemplify a more intractable moral as well as practical deficit. Political and public anxiety in the UK has crystallized around those viewed as being at the bottom of society. Over the last few years, this concern increased to near panic proportions after a series of child abuse cases hit the headlines. Extreme and rare occurrences such as the violent death of a 17-month-old boy at the hands of his mother and stepfather, and a plot to abduct a 9-year-old girl concocted by her mother to collect newspaper reward money sparked an outpouring of disgust and horror. Despite their highly exceptional nature, these examples have been taken by many as graphic illustrations of the amorality and incompetence of poor, working-class families. Without help and or coercion, poor parents are seen as destined to transmit their moral and cultural deficits down through the generations.

More specifically, such “problem” families have been placed at the centre of a contemporary anxiety about “antisocial behaviour.” There has been a growing tendency for particular families to be singled out by the media and branded “families from Hell.” Again, such depictions are deeply classed and are sometimes explicitly “racialized.”<sup>3</sup> Names, addresses, and photographs are often published alongside detailed accounts of their alleged misdemeanours that tend to include being loud, terrorizing their communities, and allowing their children to “run wild.” Politicians have fuelled and fed into this anxiety about families gone “bad,” depicting incompetent

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, £1 m neighbours from hell: Meet the gipsy family terrorising an entire street (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1206652/The-1m-neighbours-hell-Meet-gipsy-family-terrorising-peaceful-street.html#ixzz0UMwmmup>).

parents as a serious social problem that must be tackled. For example, Louise Casey, a high-profile advisor to the last Labour government, gave the following evidence to a Parliamentary review of crime prevention in 2010:

You have to crack down on the very small number of absolutely problematical families that cause the most havoc in communities, and that ranges from the lowest level of disorder that we call antisocial behaviour to the nastiest crimes. They are few in number but the problems that they cause in communities are phenomenal, and it would prevent a great deal of crime if we got to those people very effectively.... It is not about having a view on every single parent, but it is having a view and a judgment to be made on people whose children are out of control. That tells a committee that is looking at crime prevention that the first weapon in trying to prevent crime is looking at the family and looking at the families that are messing up and cannot cope or are deliberately choosing not to cope (Casey 2009).

Echoing that reasoning, developments in public policy have seen a clear trend towards authoritarian measures. For example, specialist “family intervention projects” were introduced in the UK in 2006 with the stated aim of providing intensive support and enforcement action for problematic families, with some providing residential supervision. Widely dubbed as “sin bins” for feckless families, this initiative was given central prominence by the outgoing Labour government, with the previous Prime Minister, Brown 2009, showcasing them in one of his last keynote addresses in 2009:

Family intervention projects are a tough love, no nonsense approach with help for those who want to change and proper penalties for those who don't or won't.... Starting now and right across the next Parliament every one of the 50,000 most chaotic families will be part of a family intervention project—with clear rules, and clear punishments if they don't stick to them.<sup>4</sup>

The incoming Conservative-led administration has since made a similar pledge to “turn troubled families around” with intensive support.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to previous normative depictions of functional, harmonious nuclear family units, contemporary family ideology appears to operate largely through exemplification of “chaotic,” inept families. The effect of this goes far beyond the specific requirements placed on these families themselves, with the general public co-opted into the surveillance and policing of both their own and other people's family lives.

To conclude, this chapter has discussed a new politics of family in which emphasis is placed less on structure and function and more on knowledge and competence. I have outlined five key changes characterizing this shift. Notions of family have become firmly cemented around practices of child rearing, framing it as a task requiring particular know-how and skill. More specifically, governments have invested heavily in cultivating the realm of the personal through child development.

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<sup>4</sup>See transcript of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Keynote Conference Speech. <http://www.epolitix.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/gordon-brown-keynote-conferencespeech/>

<sup>5</sup>See transcript of a speech given by Prime Minister David Cameron to Relate in Leeds about families on 10 December 2010 (<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/12/speech-on-families-and-relationships-58035>).

Traditional notions of family/state boundaries have been challenged through greater intervention in family life. Parenting has acquired a whole new significance as a practice rather than a relationship, while children's psychological well-being generates deep anxiety and concern. At a more general level, family is increasingly viewed in terms of practices that can be targeted for reform. And significantly, this new ideology operates largely through an exemplification of bad family practices as opposed to models of good families.

This chapter has outlined political and cultural changes in the way family is understood in the UK and elsewhere and has explored some of the ways in which parents and children's lives have been shaped by new expectations, policies, and legislation. However, there is little research detailing how such families have themselves made sense of and adapted to these changes. Interesting questions remain about the extent to which parents subscribe to or resist this new politics of the family, and the bearing that class, gender, race, and ethnicity might have on meanings and experiences. In order to consider such questions, a much greater critical distancing from current ingrained and normative political frameworks will be necessary.

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# Families, Professionals, and Responsibility

Nadia Kutscher

To focus on the question of responsibility in the context of family policies and youth welfare means to reflect on the political and programmatic framework and its implications for the welfare provision for families and children. Therefore, this chapter will describe central aspects of social, educational, and family policy in Germany. After discussing unequal opportunities for coping with the educational system, it will present an analytic model of familialization and defamilialization in welfare contexts related to families and discuss its dimensions of responsabilization of parents. Finally, it will reconstruct underlying normative ideas and their implications for professional practice under the conditions of (de-) familializing family policies.

## Family Policy, Prevention, and Education

Looking at the framework of social, educational, and family policy in Germany, it makes sense to examine policies and discourses (Foucault 1991) and how they focus on family and parental responsibility. In recent years, the *bête noire* of demographic change and declining birth rates has become ubiquitous in public and political debates (BMFSFJ 2011) and constitutes a frightening scenario of an increasingly small population accompanied by economic slump and educational depletion. In this context, children are being discussed as a precious resource for the future survival and prosperity of society.

Since the 1990s, a preventive perspective has become established in child, youth, and family welfare. This began with the 8th Federal Child and Youth Report from

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1990 that described a preventive orientation as a basic approach for welfare provision. The authors claimed that a preventive approach would help reduce the probability of conflicts and risks (BMJFFG 1990, p. 85). In the last years, in response to public concern over tragic cases of child neglect and infanticide, a broad political and public initiative aiming at preventing further deaths and problematic circumstances while children are growing up has impacted on the field of social policy and welfare. In this context, early warning or early support systems<sup>1</sup> have been established (such as welcome visits to young parents after giving birth to their child, screenings in maternity clinics, etc.) in order to get in contact with parents and thereby control the circumstances under which children are being brought up. These initiatives on a federal<sup>2</sup> and communal level are mainly part of the child and youth welfare system, but also include pediatricians, nurses, preschool teachers, and midwives.

Since the publication of the results of the PISA study in the year 2000 along with Education at a Glance, IGLU, and so forth, a new debate on educational inequality and the “social inheritance” (Esping-Andersen 2007) has gained ground. Reproducing the basic arguments from the times of the “Sputnik shock,” a threat to the global economic competitiveness of Germany was discussed and is still an issue. But beneath the reductionistically competence-oriented idea of education in the PISA study, empirical educational research has now delivered a range of studies that show in more detail the aspects of social stratification in the reproductive field of family life. This will be discussed later on in this article.

The developments described above (demographic change, preventionist shift, educational inequality) are confronted with a strong interest from an economic perspective aiming to create productive citizens who are prepared for global competition. In this context, economic organizations are pushing forward their ideas of citizen education in political lobbying; and, especially in the context of “lifelong learning,” they are addressing the field of early childhood education in the sense of human capital production for a “knowledge society.” In the end, citizens—from birth on—should be prepared for employability and productiveness in a labor market that has less need for emancipated, critical subjects with their own interests but requires productive and usable labor forces (Olk and Hübenthal 2011). This is framed by a shift in the welfare system from an accommodative welfare state to an activating, investment-oriented welfare state (Kessl and Otto 2009). The new welfare state expects its subjects to invest in their own progress, it provides welfare for those who are ready to contribute, and it can be characterized by the term

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<sup>1</sup> The name “early warning systems” has been widely replaced by the expression “early support systems” because authorities wanted to reduce hostile reactions from parents visited in the context of “warning systems.” They refused to be addressed as potentially dangerous persons (persons to be warned of), and the renaming tries to accommodate that. Nonetheless, it remains questionable whether a renaming can countervail the effects of such a discourse on families.

<sup>2</sup> Nationales Zentrum Frühe Hilfen [Federal Center for Early Support]



“from welfare to workfare” (Hyde 2000; Mittelstadt 2005; Opielka 2008). In this logic, nobody has the right to benefit without making an effort themselves. In German, the political slogan in this context is “*Fördern und Fordern*” [promoting and demanding]—in line with the third way of Tony Blair: “rights and responsibilities.”

## The Family as “Microfield of Power”

Nicholas Rose (1999, p. 18) speaks of so-called microfields of power to describe how the state is extending its scope of operation and the depth of penetration into citizen subjects’ lives. This can be transferred to the field of family policy and family lives. Regarding families as a field in which central political interests are to be formed and safeguarded, this offers an analytical concept for what is happening in terms of controlling the conditions of raising children. The way in which control is being exerted in these microfields of power is not very stable and durable but tenuous, reversible, and heterogeneous. This can also be found in family and childcare policy.

During the last few years, family policy has tried to increase birth rates by different means—from providing parental pay to extending public childcare institutions. Underlying this, the political efforts to improve the rearing of children are equally broad and partly contradictory in focus. Looking at the initiatives and their underlying logic, a framework of strategies of familialization and defamilialization—enhancing a concept from Leitner et al. (2008)—can be reconstructed (see also Kutscher and Richter 2011). The following section tries to systematize these strategies.

## Familialization

Familializing initiatives can be characterized by a shift of tasks and responsibilities into the (private) field of the family. Especially in the context of education, the discourse is shaped by a privatization of responsibility, which means that parents are expected to ensure adequate and effective educational settings and a successful educational biography of their children—basically disregarding the resource contexts and conditions of the respective families. What this means for different social groups will be shown later on.

Underlying the privatization of educational responsibilities, one can observe a privatization of care. This is the case in terms of home care with private forms of care being promoted because the state is no longer able to finance and provide adequate support for all those in need of care.<sup>3</sup> Other forms are models of support

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<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the increase of food banks in Germany also represents a part of the privatization of care.

for school children or families (*Familienpatenschaften, Schulpaten, etc.*) by volunteers who are offering support in learning and afternoon care for children. In this context, a discourse on the positive effects of civil society and volunteer activities is strongly promoted by public institutions (Kessl 2006, pp. 77–78).

Another aspect frequently connected with the privatization of responsibilities can be characterized as the accentuation of appropriating technologies of the self as a solution model for social problems. In the field of the family, childcare, and education, the growing market of parental educational competence courses and of children's social competence courses indicates a basic shift toward responsabilizing parents and children by obliging them to acquire strategies of self-conduct. Many courses for parents offer to teach them appropriate attachment behavior or techniques for dealing with their children—both mostly focused on behavioral aspects and connected with causal models from biology or developmental psychology—that promise success by applying those techniques in educational settings. Education of children especially in school contexts but also in nonformal settings of child and youth welfare uses evidence-based methods such as programs aiming to strengthen socioemotional competencies and reduce behavioral problems for preschool children or programs for school children training self-conduct in solving tasks. These programs are basically behavior-oriented and developed in a psychological context, and they broadly aim to train children's behavior and adaptation in an efficiency-oriented way.

## Defamilialization

Parallel to the familializing developments reported above, strategies of defamilialization can be observed in the field of families. This means a shift of responsibilities or tasks from the sphere of the private into the sphere of public education. This perspective calls upon the education of children in public institutions to ensure the best conditions possible for their educational biography and to lay the foundation for future careers. It is being attained by, for example, not only an increase of childcare provision in recent years aiming to offer places in public childcare for at least 35% of children (Deutscher Bundestag 2011, p. 6) but also by the introduction of all-day schools (StEG-Konsortium 2010).

Not surprisingly, economic organizations such as the *Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft*, *McKinsey*, or *Bertelsmann* have got involved in the field of early childhood education, and are arguing in favor of public childcare institutions and high qualification standards for educators—basically with investment-oriented arguments.<sup>4</sup> Another aspect of the increase in the importance of public preschool

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<sup>4</sup>The Cologne Institute for Economic Research (Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft) has calculated a return on investment in the field of early childhood education and care for the national economy of 13% (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln 2007, p. 63).

child education in an institutional context is the development and implementation of early childhood curricula in Germany. Every German state now has a curriculum,<sup>5</sup> the latest ones focusing on preschool and elementary school education together, aiming to create a consistent idea of education through the institutions—often showing a tendency toward school-oriented contents and structures.

Before discussing the diverging implications of familialization and defamilialization for different target groups, the situation of unequal family life and childhoods will be sketched.

## **Social Differences Among Families Facing the Educational System**

When talking about families in a differentiated and inequality-reflecting way, there is no “family as such” but families in social contexts under certain living and resource conditions. As mentioned above, a broad range of activities in the field of family and child welfare are aiming toward successful educational participation, and these are increasingly using behavior-oriented approaches. This tendency toward individualizing educational responsibility poses questions insofar as the basic assumption—to solve the problem of social and educational disadvantages through an individualizing, behavior-oriented training of competencies—can be questioned when it is considered that opportunities and conditions for the realization of a successful educational career are, on the one hand, dependent not only on individual competencies but also on structures, and that, on the other hand, ideas of a “good life” could focus on something other than educational and labor-oriented success (Otto and Ziegler 2009).

Moreover, a lot of research has shown that the connectivity of experiences, practices, and capabilities acquired in familial life with the demands of the institutional education system depends on the child’s and family’s resources such as economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1997). Research shows that there are extensive differences between social milieus as defined by Michael Vester (Vester et al. 2001),<sup>6</sup> especially when facing educational institutions. Rahel Jünger (2008) has shown that children and parents in families with restricted resources are very conscious of the existential importance of school for their future life. At the same time, however, they have limited knowledge about the educational system, the issues to be negotiated, or the informal codes of behavior. Based on their own educational biography, they lack access to school-oriented and school-usable knowledge. This leads to the experience that parents from these families are not sufficiently able to support their children in the context of educational institutions, and this also leads to a habitus of

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<sup>5</sup> See for an overview: <http://www.bildungsserver.de/zeigen.html?seite=2027>.

<sup>6</sup> Milieu as dependent on social, cultural, and economic capital resources (Bourdieu) that influence the formation of a milieu-related habitus.

subordination and anxiety about criticizing teachers by both parents and children (Jünger 2008). Annette Lareau (2003) has also shown the different fit between capabilities acquired in the familial context and competence- as well as habitus-related expectations in the institutional system. She uses the basic logic of childrearing in the respective milieus to explain the different attitudes toward the school institution. In this context, she notices how working class and poor families have a feeling of dependency on institutions, of helplessness and frustration, and a perception of conflict between educational practices at home and those in educational institutions (Lareau 2003, p. 31).

Rahel Jünger (2008) has found that in contrast middle-class families possess a relaxed attitude toward school as well as broad knowledge about the educational system and its habitual codes. Both children and parents display logic of investment in school and deal confidently with norms and teachers. Based on the parents' own institutionally and habitual compatible educational biographies, the children experience support from their parents when facing tasks or problems in the school context and feel free to criticize teachers and norms. This correlates with Lareau's (2003, p. 31) observations that parents in middle-class families criticize and intervene in the school to promote their (children's) interests, and that their children are encouraged and trained to criticize themselves.

Another study by Amy Paugh (2002) on the language socialization of children shows that not only underlying communicative competencies are imparted in daily family life but also family- and work-related ideas and values such as relations of superordination and subordination, ways of participation, and so forth. Hence, one could say that habitus formation takes place "at the dinner table."

Like Annette Lareau, Tanja Betz (2008) also reports that children from disadvantaged families acquire competencies that are not usable in school contexts, although achievements in school have a much higher relevance for their parents than they do for parents from privileged milieus. At the same time, because these parents are much less able to support their children in school assignments, their children experience school as a place characterized by anxiety, failure, and disdain. Children from milieus with higher capital resources participate far more often in extracurricular educational activities, and their leisure time is far more structured and planned by adults. This leads them to acquire experiences with heteronomous success and structured time that are relevant for their future qualification. The resources in these families are less restricted and thus they feel more unburdened. Children experience school as a more pleasant place because they experience the competencies acquired in their familial life as linkable to school requirements and their parents have a more easy-going attitude toward school achievements (Betz 2008, pp. 293–295).

Against this background, it becomes clear that the question of parental responsibility needs to be reflected in the context of the availability of economic, social, and cultural capital resources within families and their relation to realization chances in terms of successful social and educational participation. In the following, the interdependence between families' resources and (de-)familialization strategies in the welfare state will be discussed to show the disparities in this context.

## **Familialization, Defamilialization, and Diverging Focuses on Different Milieus**

The shift of responsibility for the children's future chances to the familial resource context is often linked with a moralizing discourse on parental responsibility that classifies the inability of disadvantaged parents to sufficiently support their children as individual failure. This moralizing discourse characterizes disadvantaged parents as nonmotivated, oriented toward their subjective well-being, neglectful of their children's needs, and so forth; and it disregards resource problems (Chassé 2008; Klein 2009, p. 25; Klein et al. 2005). Blending out resource inequalities on the basis of an individualizing understanding of parenthood leads to a consolidation of inequalities. Moreover, this decontextualized focus on responsibility poses pressure on families that is easier for families with higher capital to answer than it is for disadvantaged families.

The accompanying increase in the institutionalization of childrearing is also characterized by a double-layered meaning: It becomes a private growing up under public control. The measures implemented in the context of child protection and educational advancement lead to a stronger regulation of private matters of familial education (Oelkers and Richter 2010). A central aim of institutionalizing childhood focusing on disadvantaged families is to increase the mothers' labor force participation to make families independent of welfare benefits and also increase tax revenues (Kutscher and Richter 2011). However, in addition, the public debate since reports such as PISA and others is arguing that an institutionalization of children's education raises the possibility of compensating inequalities due to social background.

Reflecting on the general logic of applying (de-)familializing strategies to socially disadvantaged families, it can be stated that the underlying idea concentrates on basic needs and necessities, dealing with elementary issues of providing a living and enabling a basic educational participation.

Regarding middle-class milieus, parents also experience a relocation of responsibility and a moralizing debate on parenthood. But whereas they have resource opportunities available that allow them to cope with the demands on the basis of social networks, knowledge, and a resource-rich habitus, the issues discussed in terms of familialization that are focusing on them are defined by the question of choice, for example, whether to stay at home and care for the children. This is linked to a positive connotation of private care, often based on arguments from attachment theory—that is not present in a comparable way when discussing disadvantaged families.

In terms of defamilializing strategies, the arguments addressing middle-class families are to create incentives for mothers to increase their contribution to raising the birthrate and thus to offer them the opportunity to have children and continue working. Here, the reconciliation of work and family life is the central aim (Böllert 2010). In general, middle-class families are addressed by defamilializing strategies in a sense of enabling choice and of supporting parental self-fulfillment. Comparing both target groups under a discourse perspective, it can be stated that familialization seems to be regarded as more acceptable for middle-class families, whereas defamilialization seems to be the preferred strategy for disadvantaged families.

## **Responsibilization and Normalization: The Hidden Agenda**

These underlying different logics of addressing families are completed by two dispositifs in a Foucauldian sense: the idea of responsabilization and forms of normalization.

Responsibilizing parents (see, also, Oelkers 2011; Oelkers and Richter 2010) is intertwined with the idea of activation, which means to ascribe responsibility under conditions that make it hard to comply with. This means that parents are held responsible for their children's successful growing up while completely disregarding resource contexts. On the other hand, parents are having to face being responsible under circumstances that generally make it difficult to shoulder this responsibility (Kocyba 2004, pp. 20–21): “One can prepare for the case of endangerments, but for the one who does this, they change into risks as soon as one connects the event risk/probability of occurrence or the extent of future damage with one's own acting or forbearance” (Bröckling 2004, p. 213, translated). Thus, the risk debates in the context of childhood lead to a responsabilizing discourse that puts pressure on all parents—but under different resource conditions (Henry-Huthmacher and Borchard 2008).

Parents are also confronted with subliminal measures of “normal” or “appropriate” childrearing. Every discourse on parents' responsibility focuses explicitly or implicitly on ideas of a “normal” or “right” way to educate children. This idea of normality is characterized by the constitution of the “social” or the “normal” by means of measurement/quantification and standardization and norms in the field of social realities. It thus leads to a differentiation between norm and deviance that seems “natural,” but, at the same time, has a moralizing dimension (Bublitz 2003, pp. 151–162; Seelmeyer and Kutscher 2011). Moreover, defining educational issues in early childhood curricula anchors an idea of normalization (as the appropriate issues and fields of knowledge to be expected from early childhood education). In his governmentality studies, Michel Foucault (2006, pp. 58–60) discusses normalization as a power dispositif connected with economic regulation aiming to increase productivity. Reflecting on the developments mentioned above, the establishment of normalization strategies has a broad impact on shaping children's lives and presents a broad field for future research.

## **Implications for Professional Practice in the Context of Familialization and Defamilialization**

The pivotal question then becomes what does it mean to work as a professional under the circumstances of (de-)familializing strategies? If activation and responsabilization are established as dispositifs in the context of education, professional practice relies on installing and teaching technologies of the self as an approach to dealing with the responsibility problem in the eligible behavioral dimension.

This would imply training parental conduct, attachment behavior, and concepts based on behavioral theory promising to give certitude in the uncertain situations that essentially characterize educational settings. Another approach would be to use behavior-oriented methods of learning and disciplining to educate children—which would also be a way of normalizing. Connected with this, against the background of responsabilization, professional social and pedagogical work would focus on activating responsibility (Oelkers 2009; Oelkers et al. 2010), decontextualizing resource inequalities, and individualizing risk and performing behavior-focused prevention.

These activating concepts of social work and pedagogy fit into the subject-oriented tradition of these professions, perverting their idea into subjectivation for productivity. Whereas the political acceptance of such social-pedagogic concepts and strategies is actually nowadays widespread, this focus on behavioral aspects implies a neglect of sociostructural circumstances such as class, gender, race, age, and handicap (Kessl et al. 2007, p. 12). It thus becomes evident that the analysis of and reflection on programs in which social work is involved as well as the analysis of and reflection over implicit and explicit normativity in professional practice are crucial—also in relation to institutional and political interests (Kessl and Bock 2011).

All-day schools represent a microfield of power as well, and here the role of social work, pedagogy, and parents can be reflected in a similar way. In this context, familial resources and interests will also be negotiated and will influence service provision. Here, sensitivity for inequalities and the challenge of unequal support will be part of the “game of powers.”

For future research, it is essential to analyze substructures of power, habitus differences, and their consequences for developing services in all-day schools that focus on both children and families. Moreover, techniques and methods of teaching self-conduct need to be analyzed and reflected as mechanisms of power. In the broader framework, there will be a strong need to analyze tendencies toward (de-)familialization and their consequences for educational participation.

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# Nordic Politicization of Parenthood: Unfolding Hybridization?

Anne Lise Ellingsæter

Changing gender relations of family and work in Europe are challenging the relationship between the welfare state and parents with young children. This has brought about a “politicization of parenthood”—wide-ranging, controversial political processes in which the boundaries between the private and the public are redesigned (Ellingsæter and Leira 2006). Considerable attention has been directed toward the Nordic welfare states for their pioneering developments of policies supporting working parents. A main interest has been in the policy similarity of these countries; they tend to cluster around key policy elements that go toward a “dual earner/dual carer” model. The aim of this model is the symmetrical engagement of mothers and fathers in both market work and unpaid work in the home (see Gornick and Meyers 2008). Nonetheless, there are also policy differences that challenge the image of a uniform Nordic childcare model (e.g., Leira 2006).

Policy regimes, including Nordic childcare regimes, are social products and thus unfinished ones (Mahon 2002b), and policy institutions are fraught with tensions pressuring for change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Considering the central role of the Nordic welfare states in debates on institutional reform, policy change in these welfare states is of considerable interest. Accordingly, the following questions are addressed in this chapter: Which trends characterize the current processes in the politicization of parenthood in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden? Is the dual earner/dual carer model gaining in strength? Are policies converging or diverging? Is political consensus or political conflict the dynamic of policy reform? What impact do reforms have on parents’ practices? Childcare policies are approached as “regimes,” that is, the emphasis is on national configurations of key policy arrangements, parental leave schemes, childcare services, and cash-for-care schemes.

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This approach accentuates policies as a system and the interaction of policies in generating a structure of opportunities for parenthood (Ellingsæter 2006). It also exposes contradictions and tensions among different policies that are important when trying to understand the underlying dynamics of policy change and the impact of policies on parents' practices.

## **Childcare Policy Redesign: Processes and Impact**

Interest in the political processes shaping childcare politics is on the rise. It is increasingly emphasized that the policymaking process is complex and involves multiple actors and stakeholders (e.g., Kamerman and Moss 2009). To comprehend policy change, it is necessary to take into account the policy process including its historic background, political intent, compromises, policy content, and assumptions (Ellingsæter 2003). Varying power constellations of political actors and interests mean that there are different opportunities for policy reform at different periods of time. For instance, shifting government coalitions create new political opportunities, but governments often have to reach compromises. There is also a growing emphasis on the role of ideas in public policy development. Ideas may both facilitate and constrain policymaking. Discourse serves to demonstrate that welfare reform is not only necessary, by giving good reasons for new policy initiatives based on sound empirical arguments, but also appropriate, by appealing to values (Schmidt 2002).

The degree to which policy reform impacts on parents' social practices may vary. A particularly important point is that policy interventions may play different roles in different historic periods. Welfare state policies may either react or adapt to changing circumstances, or they may sometimes be proactive (Kautto et al. 2001). Some family policies respond to family change, some aim to conserve a traditional family pattern, whereas others intend to induce family change (Leira 2002). Policies instituted to close gaps that have developed between policy regulations and social practices in effect support ongoing social transformations. A stimulus–response model of social action, based on a simplistic notion of the economic rational human, underpins much social policy thinking (Edwards and Duncan 1996). It assumes that parents respond in a predictable manner to family policy initiatives, bringing about the intended effects. However, the “working” of policies, the match between the concrete reform and the social context it is inserted into, is seldom so straightforward. Increasing complexity in national family policy packages is likely to complicate the relationship between the intent of policy reform and the actual outcome (Daly and Lewis 2000). Policy ambiguity and inconsistency are common; the broader the range of the policy package, the more room there is for ambiguity and contradictions. Thus, family policy measures might be offset not only by contradictory ends in other policy domains but also by other family policies. Moreover, the outcome of similar policies may be different, because they are inserted into different national contexts.

## The Dual Earner/Dual Carer Model and a Contestant

A dual earner/dual carer model entails policies that encourage mothers' labor force participation and a redistribution of care: from mother to father in the family and from family to society (see Korpi 2000). The two main policy elements of a dual earner/dual carer model are job-protected *paid parental leave* and universal access to high-quality, affordable *childcare services*.

*Paid parental leave* is an important part of social policy in most developed countries, but leave policies may include multiple concerns, such as economic support, protection of maternal and child health, promotion of maternal employment, support for parental time with children, and fathers' involvement in care (Kamerman and Moss 2009, p. 259). Various parental leave arrangements have different transformative ability when it comes to *redistributing care from mother to father*. Following Brighthouse and Wright (2008), one can distinguish between three kinds of parental leave: (a) Equality-impeding policies, that is, leaves given only to mothers, but also unpaid leaves. Such leaves do not contribute to reducing inequality within the gendered division of labor within the family. (b) Equality-enabling policies, that is, paid leaves given to families as a family entitlement that reduce the obstacles for women combining employment and children and make it easier for men to engage in caregiving activities. This policy enables a redistribution of care within families, but puts no pressures on families to adopt such strategies. (c) Equality-promoting policies, that is, individual and nontransferable entitlement given to each parent; this incentive puts pressures on families to share caregiving activities more equally. Only the latter policies support symmetrical parenthood.

*Childcare services* are *redistributing care from the family to society*, that is, they are “defamilizing” childcare. Publicly funded childcare services may serve various policy aims. They can be a social policy instrument for increasing employment, gender equality, or equality in children's upbringing; at the same time, they can aim to provide pedagogical stimulation and care in a safe environment (Bergqvist and Nyberg 2001). Access to public childcare services for children under the age of 3 is the litmus test on a modern family policy directed toward the dual earner family and gender equality (Korpi 2000). Many countries provide educational programs for children aged 3 and above, but these are generally not intended as gender equality measures. Childcare services for children under 3 are considered a main dimension in distinguishing between different service regimes among welfare states (Anttonen and Sipilä 1996).

Some policies are at odds with the dual earner/dual carer policy model's ambition of redistributing care. The most disputed contestant—in both scholarly and political debates—is *cash-for-childcare schemes*: schemes “familizing” care. Cash-for-care benefits may be used for different purposes, but the most contested are those benefits given instead of day care in order to support maternal/parental childcare at home (Sipilä et al. 2010). Such schemes are commonly classified as traditional male breadwinner family policies, presuming or being neutral to a traditional gendered division of labor in society as well as within the family (Korpi 2000).

Parental choice, valorization of parental care, and a more equal distribution of state support between employed and nonemployed mothers are common rationales for cash-for-care schemes. Cash benefits usually involve low payment however. A common denominator for those European countries that have introduced cash-for-care benefits is that they are backed by center-right governments (Morgan and Zippel 2003). However, Sipilä et al. (2010) argue that cash-for-care benefits should not only be seen as a conservative or religious “reaction against modernity” or as being connected to neofamilist and neoliberal values, but that they are also associated with the overexploitation of both the female and male labor force, power struggles between interest groups, and efforts to retrench public expenditure.

## Nordic Differences

Several scholars have drawn attention to historical and current Nordic differences with regard to childcare politics. A historical study comparing women’s incorporation into welfare politics in Norway and Sweden in the formative period of the welfare state in the late 1800s and early 1900s depicts Norway as a “puzzle,” a more gender-traditional society (Sainsbury 2001). Lewis’ (1992) breadwinner regime typology from the early 1990s, distinguishing between historically “strong,” “modified,” and “weak” male breadwinner states, emphasizes variation within the Scandinavian states. Sweden was found to be a “weak” male breadwinner state in which a shift was taking place toward a dual breadwinner state (as measured by the integration of women in the labor market, social security entitlements and taxes, and public intervention in care work). Norway was a “modified breadwinner state,” because the state has treated women primarily as wives and mothers, and not as workers. This “ambivalence” has been noted by scholars (e.g., Leira 2002). Norway’s current childcare regime has been characterized as a *hybrid dualistic* family policy model combining cash transfers to families with dual earner support (Ellingsæter 2003).

A decade ago, Mahon (2002a) contended that the Nordic countries were taking different roads: Finland was moving along a neofamilist path, whereas Denmark and Sweden were following a gender-egalitarian path. Mahon argued that Danish and Swedish experiences showed that it was still possible to keep equality as a central principle of welfare state redesign. Her indicators were a deepening commitment to gender equality in parental leave arrangements for the care of infants, including not too long leaves and individual rights for fathers, and access to quality childcare services as a right for all children. In Mahon’s analysis, Finland was considered to be moving away from gender equality, eroding the collective childcare provision by developing cash benefits as a means of ensuring “parental choice.” Neofamilist strategies provide support for those who choose to stay at home, and not only those who choose to work. The pressure for defamilialization makes the choice of a “temporary homemaker” status an attractive option.

However, other scholars have nuanced Mahon's analysis, and some argue that each of the Nordic welfare states represents a distinctive childcare model (Leira 2006). For instance, there are important differences between Denmark and Sweden regarding gender equality, especially support for caring fatherhood (Leira 2006). Gender equality is a strong informal norm but a weak explicit policy norm in Denmark, and this also applies to childcare policies (Borchorst 2006). Norway was not included in Mahon's analysis. If it had been, its family policy dualism would have complicated the egalitarian versus familialism dichotomy. What is more, and what will be addressed in the following, is that policy similarities and differences among the countries have shifted since Mahon's analysis.

## **Converging or Diverging Childcare Regimes?**

The following analysis concentrates on reforms in parental leave schemes, childcare services, and cash-for-care schemes over the past decade or so.<sup>1</sup> The main interest is in how the dual earner/dual carer model is faring. Are policies further strengthening the processes of redistributing care—from mother to father in the family, and from the family to society? Or are policies counteracting redistributive processes? The historical context, political processes, and rationales of reforms are emphasized, and the degree of consensus and conflict is assessed.

### ***Redistributing Care from Mother to Father***

Current parental leave systems are the outcome of reforms occurring over a long period of time since the mid-1970s. Convergence has been the main long-term trend in at least three policy elements although the timing of the various reforms has varied extensively. The three elements are: a shift from maternal leave to parental leave, leave extensions to about a year, and the introduction of a flexible regulation of leave take-up (Ellingsæter 2009). Accordingly, the current Nordic paid parental leave arrangements share several similarities. The total length of parental leave is moderately long, and wage compensation levels are high in all the countries. Sweden has the longest total leave: 13 months at 90% wage replacement (plus 3 months paid at a flat rate). In Denmark, the leave is 12 months at 90% wage replacement, whereas in Norway, parents can choose between 11 months (47 weeks) at 100% or 13 months (57 weeks) at 80% wage replacement. Finland has the shortest leave and the lowest compensation; 9 months at 70% wage replacement.

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<sup>1</sup>It concentrates on key reforms in these three policy arrangements. For policy details, see, e.g., Gíslason and Eydal (2010).

On the other hand, there are different trends in equality-promoting measures that *redistribute care from mothers to fathers*. Currently, only Norway and Sweden has a daddy quota for fathers; nearly 3 months in Norway and 2 months in Sweden. This part of the leave is earmarked for fathers on a take it or leave it basis. Finland introduced “bonus weeks” in 2003; a father gets 4 weeks of nontransferable leave if he takes 2 weeks of the joint parental leave. In Denmark, a 2-week daddy quota was introduced in 1998, but it was abolished in 2002. Daddy quotas have had a significantly positive effect on fathers’ take-up of leave: the longer the quota, the higher the fathers’ share of total leave days. In 2009, Swedish fathers took up 23% of all leave days, whereas Norwegian fathers took up 12% of the total leave days (the daddy quota was 6 weeks) (Nordic Council of Ministers 2010). Danish and Finnish fathers took less of the parental leave days: 7%.

The variation in daddy quotas reflects national political struggles. Norway was the first country to introduce a 4-week daddy quota in 1993. It was proposed by a Social Democratic minority government, and the main aim was to redistribute caring time from mothers to fathers (Ellingsæter 2007). The right-wing parties opposed the quota, because it denies parents’ the freedom of choice, punishing parents who do not use it. The quota was supported by the Socialist Left Party, and by the confessional Christian Democratic Party; the latter because it would give fathers an insight into the importance of women’s care work, and thus increase men’s recognition of care work. The total leave was extended at the same time, but the extension was not prioritized by the Christian Democratic Party and the right-wing parties; they proposed a cash-for-care benefit instead as a measure to increase the family’s freedom of choice regarding care. Extensions of the daddy quota have been on the political agenda in the past decade. The quota was extended with 1 week added to the total leave in 2005 and 2006, respectively. The first by a center-right government; the second, by a majority center-left government; both were supported by all parties except the right-wing populist Progress Party. Further extensions of the quota were added in 2009 (4 weeks) and 2011 (2 weeks) by a majority center-left government (2 weeks and 1 week were respectively taken from the joint leave). In the public debate, the Conservative Party appeared as staunch opponent of quotas, defending families’ right to choose, but all parties except the Progress Party voted in favor (Ellingsæter 2011). Lately, political positions have become more polarized. An individual 50–50 division is proposed by some Social Democratic fractions, but opposed by leading party figures advocating long breastfeeding periods. The Conservative Party, despite internal disagreement, decided in 2010 to join the Progress Party in their aim to abolish the whole quota in order to ensure parental choice. This turn makes the abolishment of the daddy quota a realistic scenario; opinion polls indicate that there might be a change of government at the next election in 2013.

Whereas Sweden was the first country to introduce parental leave in 1974, it was the second country to introduce earmarked leave for fathers in 1995. After the Social Democrats lost their first election in 1976 after 44 years in government, their gender equality policies radicalized, and one of the policy proposals adopted was that of a daddy month in the parental leave arrangement. The center-right government

rejected this proposition as being a Socialist ambition of controlling family life (Chronholm 2009). But when the Social Democrats regained power in 1982, the daddy quota was no longer part of their policy: parents were to decide on this matter themselves. In 1991, a new center-right government was elected, and it was this government that introduced a nontransferable “father month” in 1995. It was promoted by the Liberal Party, and it was part of a coalition compromise in which a cash-for-care benefit was introduced by the Christian Democrats and the Conservative Party. The extension of a second daddy month in 2002 was initiated by a Social Democratic government. A proposal in 2005 to introduce a 5-month individual leave for each parent was too radical for the Social Democrats, however (Chronholm 2009). The center-right government in office since 2006 has not furthered the individualization of leave, but a tax reduction scheme has been introduced making it more profitable for fathers to take leave. Further individualization of leave has not been on the agenda of this government; but neither is the abolishment of the quota. Chronholm maintains that this history of reform suggests that individualization of parental leave has been characterized by ambivalence even within the political parties.

Inspired by Norway and Sweden, a Social Democratic–Social Liberal government in Denmark together with the left introduced a 2-week daddy quota in 1998 (Borchorst 2006; Eydal and Rostgaard 2010b). The quota was not subject to disagreement in Parliament, and was passed after a brief debate. “Free choice” entered the political agenda in the early 2000s, however, and the quota was abolished in 2002 by the new right-wing coalition government (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010b). “Parental choice” was the main political motivation—quotas inhibit choice (Borchorst 2006). The quota had been a success though, raising the leave take-up among fathers, but the right-wing parties managed to frame earmarking as negative interference in the private affairs of families without drawing attention to the significance of the gendered structural aspects of parental leave (Borchorst 2006). Borchorst sees this in light of a much weaker politicization of men as carers and fathers in the family in Denmark compared to Norway and Sweden; Danish men were entitled to parental leave a decade later than Swedish fathers, and the earmarked daddy leave was also introduced later. However, the center-left’s failure to challenge the choice rhetoric also reflected that these parties were internally divided on the issue, argues Borchorst. Since 2003, the center-right government has continued to emphasize parental choice in the leave arrangement. Borchorst maintains that the struggle over the daddy quota reveals that the “fight over meaning” is an important part of the political game and the competition for electoral support. It has proven to be difficult to produce an alternative to the center-right free-choice rhetoric that became hegemonic during the quota debate in 2001 (Borchorst 2006). However, the new center-left government in office since 2011, has a daddy quota of 12 weeks on their agenda.

Despite inspiration from the other Nordic countries and many years of debates on fathercare, an ordinary daddy quota has not yet been established in Finland (Lammi-Taskula and Takala 2009). However, as previously mentioned, there is the “bonus weeks” arrangement, but these have had little impact. This situation can be seen in light of the historically much weaker role of Social Democracy in Finland than in the other Nordic countries. The Centre (Agrarian) Party has been the main



political power and able to obstruct social reforms (Lammi-Taskula and Takala 2009; see, also, Hiilamo and Kangas 2009). Reforms to promote equal sharing of leave have been based on compromises and gradual adjustments, resulting in a very complicated parental leave scheme. Lammi-Taskula and Takala (2009) contend that the central actors in the development of parental leave policies have been the main employer and employee federations, while the role of governments has been more passive. Hence, labor market concerns, including cost containment, and the interests of certain occupational groups have been more important than policy aims such as gender equality. Nevertheless, fathercare is more highly valued by left-wing and liberal parties than by the Centre Party and more conservative right-wing parties (Lammi-Taskula and Takala 2009).

### ***Redistributing Care from Family to Society***

The other process for *redistributing care—from the family to society*—suggests a converging trend of defamilialization in the Nordic countries. The expansion of childcare services is embedded in political struggles between political interests favoring different family models. Denmark and Sweden are the forerunners in developing well-funded public childcare. In these two countries, facilitating mothers' employment and gender equality have been main rationales, in addition to the pedagogical needs of children. In Norway, the political conflict over support for the dual earner/dual carer family model versus the traditional one-income family has been more prominent than in the other Nordic countries, delaying service expansion despite parents' increasing demands (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007). Today, public childcare services are approaching a *universal* arrangement in terms of childcare services as a right and in terms of parents' usage. All four Nordic countries have institutionalized the right to a place in publicly subsidized childcare services. There is some variation in criteria of access (parents' labor market situation, age of child) and in the organization of services (the prevalence of family day care, private providers, etc.). In Sweden, parents who work or study, are on leave, or are unemployed are entitled to a place in day care for their children, whereas all children 4 years and older have an individual right to 15 h of childcare per week (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a). The municipalities should offer a place within a reasonable time period (3–4 months). In Denmark, municipalities should offer a place to children from the age of 6 months, whereas in Norway, the right to a place is for children who have reached the age of 1 year (by 1 September). The timing of the introduction of a right to childcare varies. In 1996, Finland was the first country to introduce an individual right to a place in day care for children under 7 (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a). Norway is the latecomer; the right to a place in day care was introduced in 2009. Provision of services in Norway has developed slowly, lagging considerably behind that of Denmark and Sweden, particularly for the under-3s. But the situation has improved greatly since the mid-2000s due to a massive expansion in places (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007).

Despite similar policies, there are a few interesting differences in coverage rates. Day care for children aged 2–5 is a nearly universal arrangement in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Among the 3–5s, the coverage rate is 95–98%; among 2-year-olds, it varies between 86% and 92%. The striking exception is Finland. This country stands out with significantly lower coverage in all age groups; among the 3- to 5-year-olds, it varies between 67% and 77%; and the rate is 50% among the 2-year-olds. There is some variation in coverage for infants and 1-year-olds when comparing Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In Denmark, 15% of infants are in day care compared to 4% in Norway and 0% in Sweden. Coverage rates for 1-year-olds are rather high, but follow a similar pattern: 88% in Denmark, 70% in Norway, and 50% in Sweden. One explanation is the variation in the length of parental leave, and the age at which the right to care services starts. In Finland, coverage rates for infants and 1-year-olds are 1% and 29%, respectively. The lower rates in Finland are usually explained with the cash-for-care benefit, but this is not the whole story.

### *Counteracting Redistribution of Care*

Another converging policy trend is *counteracting* the dual earner/dual carer model and the redistribution of care. All four Nordic countries currently have cash-for-childcare schemes in which receiving benefit is tied to a nonuse of subsidized childcare services. Finland and Norway have a state-based benefit, whereas Denmark and Sweden leave it to the municipalities whether or not to offer this kind of benefit. Some of the cash-for-care schemes have developed from national claims for a mother's wage, and thus have connotations of support for the stay-at-home mother (Leira 2002). It is only more recently that such schemes have been advocated as increasing parental choice in the reconciliation of employment and care. A comparison of Finland, Norway, and Sweden concluded that there are significant differences in entitlements and policy rationales (Rantalaiho 2010). However, freedom of choice has been a main rationale in all the countries.

The Finnish Child Home Care Allowance was introduced in 1985 (currently 314 Euro per month; see Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a). The Finnish cash-for-care benefit rests on a political compromise and consensus—the opposition was never very strong (Rantalaiho 2010). The compromise was to combine the right to cash for care with a right to day-care services. Hiilamo and Kangas' (2009) comparison of the political struggle over the cash-for-childcare schemes in Finland and Sweden emphasizes the different political power constellations in the two countries. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party's hegemonic position has also influenced the nonsocialist discussion. In Finland, the Agrarian, later Centre Party, was the dominant party until the 1960s, after which the Social Democratic Party became a partner in coalition cabinets. In Sweden, the Social Democratic women's movement dominated the political discourse, whereas in Finland, the "agrarian-bourgeois voice was the loudest" (p. 460). With regard to cash-for-care benefit, Finnish center-right advocates managed to frame the reform with positive connotations, especially the

value of work at home and parents' opportunities to choose the form of care they need. In Sweden, the benefit became associated with an outdated family model. Moreover, costs have been an overarching concern in Finland: cash for care is much cheaper than day care. There are no strong initiatives to abolish the benefit.

In Norway, a cash-for-care benefit was introduced in 1998 after a fierce and polarized debate (Ellingsæter 2003). The benefit entitles parents with 1- to 2-year-old children who do not attend publicly subsidized childcare to a tax-free, flat-rate monthly amount (about 400 Euro). Thus, those buying childcare outside the state-subsidized services are also entitled to the benefit. The reform was passed by a minority center coalition government with the support of the right-wing parties, with the left wing in opposition. One of the three main aims of the *cash-for-care reform* was to give families real freedom of choice regarding care; the other two aims were more time for children and more equal distribution of public subsidies. Whereas the Christian Democratic Party, the reform's persistent advocate over a considerable time period, was most concerned with making it more economically profitable for parents to choose to care for their own children, the right wing expressed a preference for cash to services, and private to public care arrangements (Ellingsæter 2007). The center-right claimed "ownership" of the freedom of choice argument in the debate, attacking the Social Democrats for conformity thinking and state intervention in the private sphere. After the introduction of the cash-for-care benefit, a new political situation emerged. With the benefit in place, the political controversy could be put aside at least temporarily, giving space for a stronger focus on childcare services. Expanding places and lowering prices have led to an increase in demand (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007). Both the Social Democrats and the Socialist Left Party in the majority coalition government in office since 2005 have had the abolishment of the cash-for-care benefit on their party program, but the third coalition partner, the Centre Party, has been more hesitant. The compromise reached is to offer the benefit only to 1-year-olds from 2012.

In Sweden, a cash-for-care benefit was introduced for the first time in 1994 by a Conservative government after heated debates over several years (Nyberg 2010). When the Social Democrats returned to power shortly afterward, the benefit was withdrawn. However, a majority center-right coalition, which came into government in 2006, established the opportunity for municipalities to provide a cash-for-care benefit (up to about 375 Euro per month for children aged 1–3 years) in 2008. Two years later, in 2010, 36% of all municipalities were offering a cash-for-care benefit, most of them having center-right local governments (Nyberg 2010; Statistics Sweden 2010). Nyberg (2010) maintains that the question whether the government should support women's care work by cash allowances or women's employment by expanding public childcare services was discussed in Sweden after the Second World War. "Choice" was important in both positions: women's right to choose care versus women's right to choose employment. Opinions crisscrossed party lines at that time. The Conservative Party was against paying parents for childcare; it was seen as a natural function to be provided by the parents (Nyberg 2010). During the 1970s, the party changed its mind and joined the Centre Party; a common rationale was that state subsidies should be distributed more equally: those not using public

childcare services should receive a special allowance. The Social Democrats “third way,” the dual earner/dual carer model, appeared in the late 1960s/early 1970s: the government should support mothers’ employment but also fathers’ care for their children. The parties’ policy positions became more or less consolidated in the late 1970s: the main priorities were parental leave and childcare services versus cash allowances.

In Denmark, a right-wing coalition government in 2002 introduced the opportunity for municipalities to offer cash-for-care benefits instead of childcare services as part of a new family policy. Parents with children aged 6 months to 3 years can apply for the cash benefit only if they have applied for a place in the childcare services, and the benefit can only be received for a year. The monthly allowance is quite high (875 Euro), but paid only to parents outside the labor market (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a).

What is the impact of the cash-for-care schemes? Because these schemes are relative newcomers and they all differ, it is difficult to compare systems and to assess their outcomes (Sipilä et al. 2010). Different entitlements, eligibility criteria, and political framing in the various schemes are likely to generate different take-up rates (see Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a; Rantalaiho 2010). The effects of the Finnish and Norwegian benefits have been studied in detail, however. The interesting thing is how different the impact has been, even when differences in the schemes are taken into account. A quite high proportion of Norwegian mothers received the benefit at the start, but this proportion has fallen dramatically in line with the expansion in childcare places (Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2007). Mothers’ employment rates have been increasing in recent years, but calculations trying to estimate how mothers’ employment would have developed without the benefit suggest that mothers’ labor supply would probably have been even higher (Rønsen and Kitterød 2010). In Finland, mother’s employment rates fell after the introduction of the cash allowance, and the use of day-care services is much lower. What can explain the difference between Finland and Norway? A main explanation is likely to be mothers’ real choice of paid work. Finland has had periods with high unemployment rates, whereas the demand for labor has been strong in Norway. It is a bit early to evaluate the effects of the Danish and Swedish cash-for-care schemes, but the indications so far are that they are marginal. In Sweden, the proportion of all children receiving the cash allowance is negligible—only 2% in the municipalities that have introduced the benefit (Statistics Sweden 2010, Table 2). Very few Danish parents are reported to have received the cash benefit (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010a).

## Unfolding Hybridization?

Nordic childcare regimes have developed across several decades, augmenting their complexity. Recent policy redesigns have added not only similarities but also differences to the regimes. Trends toward individualizing parental leave, redistributing care from mother to father, are slow and uneven; setbacks have been seen in the

Danish case, and Norway may be next in line. The dual earner/dual carer model is strengthened by the convergence toward institutionalizing access to childcare services as a right, thus supporting mothers' employment and the redistribution of care from family to society. The convergence toward the institutionalization of cash-for-childcare schemes is taking the opposite direction, and, in principle, counteracting a redistribution of care from the family to society and undermining mothers' employment. The impacts of policies are not clear-cut, however. Whereas restricting "choice" by regulating quotas in parental leave visibly influences the distribution of care, adding "choice" by introducing cash for benefits has more limited and context-dependent effects.

A somewhat blurred version of a dual earner/dual carer model is appearing. All four childcare regimes emerge as dualistic hybrids combining cash transfers to families with dual earner support. Other scholars comparing work–family policies in Europe find that the Nordic welfare states are remaining on the social democratic path, but also see "an unfolding hybridization of the Scandinavian model by promoting more 'choice' in childcare, although this welfare regime is still relatively immune to neoliberalism" (Knijn and Smit 2009, p. 510). Are more complex policies, breaking with the tradition of welfare states to offer either cash or services, due to the welfare states' response to new care needs as Daly and Lewis (2000) hypothesize? Or are cash-for-care schemes expressing a "new Nordic familism," as suggested by Sipilä et al. (2010, p. 40)?

To comprehend the hybridization of contemporary Nordic childcare regimes, it is necessary to look at the underlying political tensions and dynamics. Hybridization is a product of complex processes of political conflict and compromise in which some reforms are introduced only after years of political struggles, whereas others may be abolished by new political power constellations. Hybrid models often contain latent policy conflicts that are vital in inducing institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). In such models, ideology inevitably is blended with a large dose of pragmatism. Some scholars maintain that Nordic developments in childcare policies cannot easily be explained by a left-center/right divide (Eydal and Rostgaard 2010b). Moreover, a study of the political struggle over the cash-for-childcare schemes in Finland and Sweden shows that political parties historically have "vacillated" in their policy preferences. Thus, political parties are not such "monolithic actors" as often supposed (Hiilamo and Kangas 2009, p. 472).

An important question is whether a key policy driver can still be identified. Looking for current consensus and stability in Nordic childcare regimes, what does stand out is the moderately long parental leave at high replacement rates and the universal childcare services. A common denominator of these policies is that they have many aims and thus may satisfy different policy rationales. On the other hand, manifest and latent conflicts are associated with daddy quotas and cash-for-care benefits. The main battlefield is care for the youngest children. This is where the key struggle over the boundary between the state and the family is taking place. Quotas and cash benefits are two arrangements loaded with ideologically contradictory policy elements—"regulation" versus "choice"—a tension between social democratic regulations of individual rights versus liberal freedom of choice for families.

Parental choice has become an ideological marker in the Nordic welfare state debate (Ellingsæter and Leira 2006). It is not a new idea, but its content and what it means have changed over time. Political ownership of the issue of “parental choice” has been appropriated by the political right and has become an important issue in the competition for electoral support. Although there are several differences among the various Nordic cash-for-care schemes, they express a common normative idea of “choice.” The schemes result from center-right governments in Denmark and Sweden, a center government with support from the right wing in Norway, and a compromise between center-conservative parties and weak social democrats in Finland. Policy processes related to daddy quotas demonstrate similar political dynamics: Social democracy has been important in establishing and extending quotas, whereas the abolishment of the daddy quota in Denmark is marked by the right wing, as a potential abolishment of the Norwegian quota will also be. Despite the complex political picture, this is why the relative strength of social democracy versus the political right is likely to shape the future of Nordic childcare regimes.

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# Can a Crisis Become an Opportunity? Gender and Care in Contemporary Ireland

**Brid Featherstone**

The profound difficulties facing Irish society have given rise to a questioning of past policy choices and led progressives to call for a new radically different Ireland to emerge (see, e.g., Kirby 2010). This chapter concentrates on an aspect of contemporary debates that is relatively neglected: the “care deficit” that has been apparent for some time. As NESC (2005, p. 36) noted, when large numbers of women remained in the home, the family was arguably the single most important pillar of Ireland’s national system of social protection. In a large number of instances, the care of young children, older people, and other household members with special needs hinged around the full-time presence of a fit and capable household member, usually a woman. Relatively, residual roles were played by the state and organisations in civil society and an even lesser one by commercial bodies. However, the rise in women’s employment rates from the 1970s onwards began to weaken this pillar of caring, and, during the 1990s, the rates jumped further to open a *significant deficit* between the diminished capacity of families to provide care and the development of new caring capacity on the part of the state, not-for-profit bodies, and commercial bodies.

It will be argued that this deficit needs to be challenged within a broader conversation about gender inequalities in Irish society more generally. Indeed, it will be suggested that this carries the potential to recast important social concerns around the costs of the economic crisis such as, for example, the rise in male suicide rates. It will be suggested that imbuing the current polity with a political ethics of care would support and challenge those losing the male breadwinner role to take on caring responsibilities rather than constructing them as “casualties.” However, the challenges to developing different discursive constructions are extremely daunting in

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the current climate. Economists appear to have seized control of most of the discursive spaces available and, notwithstanding the value of some of their contributions, have squeezed out any space to discuss alternatives to going bankrupt and/or reducing public services and benefits to the most vulnerable in society.

The current limitations of public debates partly reflect the fact that during the boom time, a robust infrastructure in relation to supporting care was not put in place to be invested in emotionally and practically by the general population. Constructions of care as a private responsibility were promoted by neoliberal policymakers, and in times of crisis, therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that citizens retreat into trying to self-manage, incurring considerable costs to their emotional and physical health (see Samaritans 2010; and subsequent discussion).

## Background to the Contemporary Crisis

From the end of the 1990s onwards, Ireland was lauded on the world stage as an inspirational success story with other countries seeking to emulate its apparent economic success (O'Toole 2009). Historically a small, poverty-stricken country on the periphery of Europe without natural resources, its metamorphosis into what became known as the "Celtic Tiger" was indeed startling, and its performance was remarkable. A UK economist, Kevin Gardiner, coined the term Celtic Tiger in 1994 comparing Ireland's economic take-off to the Asian Tiger economies (quoted in O'Toole 2009):

The rate of unemployment in the fifteen European Union countries as a whole remained more or less static throughout the 1990s. In Ireland it was cut in half, from a desperately high 15.6 percent to 7.4 percent (and shortly afterwards to less than 5 per cent). . . . In 1986, Irish GDP per head of population was a miserable two-thirds of the EU average, and even in 1991 it was just over three-quarters. In 1999, it was 111 per cent of the average, and significantly higher than that of the UK.... In the ten years to 2004, the growth of Irish national income averaged over 7 per cent, more than double that of the USA and almost triple the average growth rate in the Eurozone. (O'Toole 2009, pp. 12–13)

What lay behind this "success story"? O'Toole notes that any analysis must recognise the very low base that Ireland was starting from: its performance was remarkable partly because it had been so poor before. However, there was a considerable turn around in its economic fortunes. As Considine and Dukelow (2009) note, assessments of the factors involved vary in emphasis. There was an improvement in external economic conditions generally and an intensification of global economic activity. The upturn in the global economy was crucial because, for some time, the Irish state's policy had been directed at encouraging high-skill, high-technology international companies to locate in the country. Low corporation taxation rates, government grants, and, at that stage, relatively low wages were powerful inducements to companies to locate in a country that was part of the EU and had access to large markets. A young well-educated English-speaking workforce was an important "selling point" to foreign investors (Considine and Dukelow 2009, p. 73).

The development of a social partnership model involving the trade unions, in particular, contributed to a stable industrial relations climate that was attractive to international companies. Ireland's membership of the EU, as indicated, helped with access to large markets. Moreover, the impact of EU membership in terms of the benefit derived from structural and cohesion funds was significant in terms of supporting growth.

Ireland was promoted as a centre for the international finance sector with government policy overtly favouring light-touch regulation and oversight. Indeed, in 2005, the *New York Times* described Ireland as the "Wild West" of European finance because of its lax regulatory regime (O'Toole 2009). A large number of jobs in the financial sector were created, although the light-touch regulatory regime was to prove disastrous as explored further below.

Momentum slowed in 2002 after nearly a decade of high growth. This coincided with a downturn internationally, particularly in the information technology industry, that impacted significantly on Ireland. There was a return to economic growth in the years after 2002, but this return was based on what proved to be unsustainable and highly problematic economic and political practices. Excessive property values fuelled a construction boom reliant upon lending from the banks. The banks, in turn, became locked in competition about who could lend most and abandoned crucial safeguards in relation to managing risk.

There were no robust regulation and inspection systems to halt the recklessness. Indeed, a small closed circle of men (mainly) were able to lend to each other, regulate each other, and rule the country in what was to prove a disastrous version of crony capitalism (Cooper 2010; O'Toole 2009). Because money appeared to be flowing freely, there was little interrogation of its sources and of the assumption behind much of what was happening, which was that property prices would continue to rise. Moreover, when a small number of dissenting economists warned that property prices would fall, their comments were treated with derision (Ihle 2010).

The construction boom unbalanced the economy, and government spending became heavily reliant upon tax revenues from it. A fair and sustainable taxation system was not developed, and there was a continuation of historic practices in relation to tax evasion that were not subject to sanction. Government spending rose based not upon a sober assessment of the health, welfare, and infrastructure needs of the country but rather on electoral considerations such as securing success in the 2007 general election. The failure to build a sustainable infrastructure in a range of domains such as health is one of the more serious problems now facing the society (Leahy 2009).

The global financial crisis in 2008 impacted immediately and dramatically upon Ireland. As Leahy (2009) notes, the collapse of Lehmann Brothers on 15 September 2008 was a pivotal event. Whilst banks all over the world were vulnerable, it became starkly apparent that Irish banks were in a catastrophic position. They were dependent upon securing funding from other banks in Europe and worldwide, and this funding dried up almost overnight. Moreover, having lent in a reckless fashion to property developers and the building industry, they faced crises in relation to both liquidity and solvency. Furthermore, because of the interconnected nature of the

money markets, the crisis of the Irish banks posed extremely serious issues for those banks in other countries who had lent to them.

On the evening of Monday, 29 September, it was clear that the banks were on the brink of collapse after a day of falling share prices. The Irish government took the decision that evening to guarantee the deposits, loans, and obligations of the six Irish banks (a total sum of 400 billion—at the time more than twice the country's GNP). This was to prove an extremely serious mistake compounded by the failure to revisit this decision once it became clear that the bank losses were unsupportable (Kelly 2011).

In essence, it meant that the banks' debts became the state's responsibility who, in turn, through a series of austerity budgets, sought to offload the costs onto those working in the public sector and those most vulnerable in Irish society. A range of measures ensued such as cutting child benefit payments to carers, wage freezes in the public sector, and a cut in the minimum wage. The implications of some of these are returned to further below.

Despite successive austerity measures (and indeed, it could be argued *because* of these measures and their recessionary impact), the situation in relation to the public finances continued to deteriorate amid more and more revelations of the severity of the banks' debts. As is well known, Ireland was forced to accept a "bailout" from the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the autumn of 2010. Although given the interconnectedness of the banking system as noted above, it is increasingly clear that the bailout was as much about saving banks in other countries as saving those in Ireland.

At the time of writing, there is a very serious debate in Ireland about whether the terms of the bailout can be adhered to, with one highly respected economist causing consternation by asserting the need to default or face bankruptcy (Kelly 2011). Moreover, there is also a debate about whether it is fair that the Irish people, in particular, those who have been particularly hard hit by cuts in services and welfare provision, appear to be paying for the recklessness of lenders and investors.

Thus, the economic situation is extremely challenging, and the possibilities that appear to be available, or at least those that are being constructed as available in social policy terms, are extremely limited. In the next section, I explore the social policy legacy of the Celtic Tiger in this context.

## **What Kind of Society Was the Celtic Tiger?**

Kirby (2002, 2006, 2010) has argued that economic success in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger was accompanied by social failure. He uses the notion of "vulnerability" to capture the destructive impact on society caused by the freeing of the markets from controls that serve the social good (2010, p. 166). He argues that Irish society grew more vulnerable over the course of the Celtic Tiger. Indeed, despite the myth of the boom years of the Celtic Tiger that a great levelling in relation to inequality had occurred as TASC (2009) note, Ireland was among the most unequal societies in the developed world.

Levels of inequality in Ireland need to be located within an understanding of the neoliberal trajectory taken by its politicians. Ireland in the last decade of the twentieth century shifted very quickly towards the standard neoliberal model of an increasingly deregulated trade in goods, services, and labour and the relentless promotion of the market as an arbiter of efficiency, distribution, and appropriate responses to needs—both private and collective (Kirby 2009). Kirby suggests that the growth of the power of the market did not happen by accident but was the outcome of a determined politics in many countries, including Ireland, across the globe. As Harvey (2005) has argued, neoliberalism is a project that has sought to achieve the restoration of class power by those worried by their loss of economic and political power during the era of welfare capitalism after the Second World War. Harvey notes the turnaround in the share of national income going to top income earners in a range of countries between the late 1970s and 1999. Extraordinary concentrations of wealth and power emerged in countries as diverse as Russia and Mexico, throughout Latin America, and in China with a similar process happening in Ireland. Kirby (2009) concludes that the politics of market liberalisation are a politics of the power of ruling elites and their most visible manifestation is a remarkable growth in inequality. Leading politicians in Ireland argued that inequality was a necessary requirement for a dynamic liberal economy (O’Toole 2009). Thus, it was not tackled or seen as a priority.

Lynch (2010) has argued that the “care deficit” in Ireland, alluded to above and explored further below, needs to be located within a broader understanding of how interlocking inequalities have been reproduced in Ireland. She suggests there are four key systems or sets of social relations that need to be understood and transformed: economic, political, cultural, and affective. A key system clearly is the economic, and as indicated above, levels of economic inequality were very high. Gender, age, and region were all important aspects of this picture. In relation to gender, Duvvury (2011) notes that whilst during the Celtic Tiger, there was a rapid advance of women’s entry into education alongside high levels of entry into workforce particularly among married women, there was, however, a persistent gender wage gap with concentration in low-paid jobs and vulnerable employment. Women were consistently over-represented in lower-paid, atypical, part-time, flexi, and contract work (NCWI 2010). Moreover, 62% of women adjusted their working patterns on becoming a parent, in comparison to 27% of men (CPA 2007). The rate of employment of women between the ages of 20 and 49 fell by 15 points when they had a child, whilst that of men increased by six points (CPA 2007).

The political system is the set of relationships involved in making and enforcing collectively binding decisions, and it is important to note that in Ireland in the formal political system, representation of women in the last parliament before the recent general election<sup>1</sup> was at 13.9%. This places Ireland in the bottom half of representation across 160 countries and significantly below most of Europe. Spain is at 36.6%; Germany, 32.8%; Netherlands, 42%; and Sweden, 46.5% (Women in Parliaments, World Classification, 31 May, 2010, quoted in Lynch 2010).

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<sup>1</sup>The general election in 2011 did not alter this in any significant way.

The cultural system is concerned with the production, transmission, and legitimation of cultural practices and products, including forms of symbolic representation and communication. It generates differences in social standing and status, and Lynch (2010) has pointed out a range of ways in which the Irish education system, in particular, has reproduced inequality and also contributed to a discrediting of alternative thinking about more socially just ways of ordering society.

The affective system is concerned with providing and sustaining relationships of love, care, and solidarity. Lynch (2010) notes that inequality in the affective domain takes two primary forms: when people have unequal access to meaningful, loving, and caring relationships and when there is inequality in the distribution of care work (emotional and physical). Those who are likely to be deprived of love and care (due to, e.g., war and famine) are generally different from those who experience affective inequality due to undertaking a disproportionately high level of care work. Overall, according to Lynch (2010), in Ireland, women's unequal relationship with men is generated in this latter form of the affective domain and reinforced in the economic, political, and cultural domains. The issues surrounding care work are now explored further.

## Gender and Care in Ireland

The relationship between the family as a site of welfare and the state as provider and regulator of welfare is one that has changed over time. Historically, Catholic ideological perspectives about social policy encouraged the limiting of state involvement, and this was reflected in and supported by the Constitution (Fanning 2007). Article 41.1.2 of the 1937 Irish Constitution states that:

The State . . . guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State. (quoted in Fanning 2007, p. 15)

Moreover, a specific role for women was prescribed as outlined in Articles 41.2.1. and 41.2.2 respectively:

In particular the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. 41.2.2: The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (quoted in Fanning 2007, p. 15)

Whilst unpaid care work mostly by women has constituted a significant element of the welfare economy since the introduction of social insurance, entitlements to state benefits were linked explicitly to paid work and thus tied to that of the male wage earner. The National Insurance Act 1911 established a social insurance system designed to ensure that the male breadwinner could provide for his family. Even when women engaged in socially insured paid employment, they were legally entitled to lesser rates of pay. A range of discriminatory practices continued, which were challenged by the First Commission on the Status of Women in 1970. Whilst there were changes, many of the benefits introduced during the 1970s envisaged

women staying in the home although the bar on the employment of married women in certain occupations was lifted.

Entry into the European Union drove many of the reforms introduced in the 1980s and 1990s such as equal pay and legislation prohibiting discrimination. As noted previously, Ireland also started on a process of rapid change in relation to the role of women, including mothers, in paid employment. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the economy during the 1990s and afterwards was partially the result of the increasing participation of women in paid employment, and further expansion was seen to necessitate further increases. In 1981, female labour force participation was just under 30%; by 2006, it had risen to 53%; and in 2006, there was 78.5% participation in the labour force by women in the 25–34-year category (Hayes and Bradley 2007).

Because of the economic transformation from the 1990s onwards, an unprecedented set of debates began about the role the state should play in caring for families and supporting them to meet their childcare responsibilities. Many inadequacies such as those in relation to the provision of quality affordable childcare places and the reconciliation of work and family life were highlighted (Hayes and Bradley 2007). This was also linked to a growing international consensus about the beneficial effects of high-quality care and education in the early years and a social investment state rationale in relation to social cohesion and future economic prosperity (Featherstone 2004). However, despite all the debate, there was a slow and fragmented approach, especially when compared with developments internationally. Levels of childcare provision were and continue to be poor, and there has been a consistent preference for market-led solutions rather than state-provided services. Thus, childcare in Ireland is extremely expensive by comparison with other countries (see Lynch and Lyons 2008). Indeed, the OECD Family database has demonstrated that Ireland and the UK have the highest net childcare costs in the OECD (NCWI 2010). In a 2004 EU study of childcare, Ireland, alongside the UK, was ranked lowest in terms of childcare supports and maternity leave (Lynch and Lyons 2008).

In relation to the reconciliation of work and family life, here too, policies have been very underdeveloped. Parental leave of 14 weeks was introduced but on an unpaid basis, and no entitlement to paternity leave, paid or otherwise, is available. There is no right to flexible working or, indeed, to request flexible working. It is perhaps not that surprising, therefore, that research on the distribution of caring, housework, and employment among women and men in Ireland found that women did a month's more work per year than men and substantial inequalities remained (McGinnity and Russell 2008).

More generally, according to Lynch and Lyons (2008), the picture of care work varies with the sources of data. One of the major sources is the National Census, which measures unpaid caring only for adults and children with disabilities. Thus, it gives an incomplete picture of how much unpaid care work is undertaken in Ireland. When combined with other sources of data, it would appear that 28% of the adult population have care responsibilities and 85% are caring for children only, whilst a further 7% (all of whom are women) are caring for both adults and children with care needs. Overall, the disparity in unpaid caring stands at a ratio of 2.5:1.

Forty per cent of women aged 16+ have some care responsibilities, mostly for children, compared to 16% of men, with women much more likely than men to carry the primary responsibility for children without pay. Further analysis of the figures indicates that women are much more likely to be working longer hours in care work than men.

Even before the recent cutbacks in the wake of economic crisis, Ireland had one of the lowest rates of social expenditure within the EU, ranking fourth from the bottom in terms of investment in social protection, health, and education within the 27 member states. Compared to almost 50% of GDP on the part of Sweden and 45.6% on the part of Germany, for example, Ireland was spending 27.5% (Lynch and Lyons 2008).

## **Men, Women, Labour Market, and Care in the Aftermath of the Crash**

Some analysis is emerging concerning the gendering of the recession in relation to participation in the labour market. Duvvury (2011) has questioned whether this is a “he-cession,” as has been argued elsewhere, with men losing their jobs more than women. Has there been a structural shift in the labour market, and has the crisis been an opportunity for women? What has been the response of households in the light of declining income? She notes that, in the literature on the gender impacts of financial or economic crisis, two contrasting possible effects for women’s employment have been identified. First, women’s participation in the labour force increases; this has been called the “added worker” effect. This is partly due to households increasing female labour participation as a strategy for coping with declining income and to employers preferring women workers as a way of cutting costs. Second, however, there is also the “discouraged worker” effect in which women’s participation declines. This is because of the opportunity costs rising for women due to wage gaps, discrimination in benefits, and social costs of childcare, and is also due to employers’ perceptions of women as unreliable and requiring additional costs because of, for example, maternity leave.

Duvvury (2011) notes that whilst there has been some attention to the impact of welfare cuts on women, particularly those in vulnerable positions such as lone parents (see discussion below), less attention has been paid to trends in female work participation, which, she suggests, is actually fundamental to strategies by families to manage the crisis.

One trend noted in the literature is that women’s employment is protected in the initial stages because they are often in sectors less prone to cyclical fluctuations. However, as the crisis spreads and deepens, then it is more likely that women will lose jobs at a faster rate.

What has happened in Ireland so far? Unemployment rates amongst young men, followed by young women, have been increasing and are higher among those with lower education levels. Women with tertiary level (degree) qualifications have had the lowest unemployment rates and slowest increase as the crisis has spread. Women lone parents have the highest unemployment rates among families with children,



followed by married men, and then married women. Rates of unemployment are highest for young families with children below 15.

An important trend has been that of women with young children leaving the labour force alongside the entry of older women at low wages. Duvvury (2011) notes the serious implications with young women, therefore, having interrupted work histories with long-term consequences for their pensions. Because older women are entering low-waged work, there are issues around poverty levels for them and their families.

Alongside trends in the labour market, it is also important to explore how budget cuts, as a policy response to the crisis, have impacted upon the already inadequate supports for those involved in care. A key point overall is that the main focus at a national policy level is the reduction of the deficit between state expenditure and revenue. In recent weeks, there have been increasingly draconian calls to cut this deficit in order to restore Ireland's battered international reputation and bolster support for help with the debts incurred by the banks. Because both sets of debts were rolled into one by the disastrous decision in relation to the state guarantee to the banks as outlined above, Ireland is facing extraordinary levels of indebtedness for many years to come. An influential argument is that if the debts can be disaggregated, and we demonstrate we are dealing with the domestic deficit, support could be garnered from the EU and the IMF for restructuring our repayments in relation to the "bailout." Moreover, given that our banks' debts are intertwined with those of banks in other countries and indeed partly caused by problematic practices in these countries, then Ireland could point to the important role it has played in protecting the international, in particular the EU, banking system from contagion. However, such arguments ignore completely the impact of cuts on the scale proposed.

Successive austerity measures have impacted already upon those with caring responsibilities, thereby disproportionately affecting women. This is not unique to Ireland of course, as developments in the UK where an austerity programme has also been pursued demonstrate (Rake 2009). NCWI (2010) provides a fuller discussion of the Irish situation, and the following are merely some examples. Child benefit has been important to Irish mothers partly because of the high cost of childcare referred to above and its use to offset some of this cost. This has now been cut in successive budgets. Cuts in social welfare rates have impacted disproportionately upon lone parents. Among lone parents who are social welfare claimants, 98% are women. Moreover, the social welfare system is very poorly equipped to address the challenges of the current labour market and is very inflexible in relation to how it deals with changes in working hours, shift work, and so on. Furthermore, cuts in already inadequate services to those who are older and have disabilities are impacting upon care receiver and caregiver alike.

## Is Another Way Possible?

Currently, the discursive capture by "the dismal science" (economics) of the policy agenda in Ireland can appear overwhelming. Although there are considerable disagreements between them, a handful of economists dominate the airwaves and

the public terrain. Their “solutions,” however varying, are all within a familiar paradigm—reduce public expenditure and, therefore, make those who work in or are reliant upon public services carry if not all, then much of the cost of the crisis. There are, of course, counterarguments and oppositional voices. Whilst offering very important arguments for another way, centring on reform of our politics and governance, often these arguments are gender blind, and in particular, there are few who have moved beyond the dominance of a particular kind of thinking that sees human beings as independent autonomous economic actors and places involvement in paid work at the centre of what it means to be a responsible citizen. As Lynch (2010) has noted, placing the giving and receiving of care at the heart of what it is to be a citizen might help us to build a better, more equal future, and avoid some of the disastrous mistakes engendered by our adherence to neoliberalism. In the next section, I explore briefly some themes from within the ethics of care literature and then turn to offer some observations on its potential to “change the contemporary conversation” in Ireland.

Williams (2001) argues that care as a practice involves different experiences, meanings, contexts, and multiple relations of power. She calls for a “political ethics” of care in order to engage with political project intent on promoting paid work as the pathway to social inclusion, cohesion, and citizenship. She also locates her call within a theoretically sophisticated and substantial feminist social policy scholarship in which care has become a central analytic concept in the comparative study of welfare regimes.

Williams (2001) suggests there have been two waves of care scholarship by feminists. She suggests that whilst writers such as Carol Gilligan (1982) from within the first wave were important, they had limitations. They were almost entirely gender-focused with tendencies towards an undifferentiated category of womanhood underpinned by essentialism around gender differences. There was also an assumption that the site of care was the heterosexual family and “the focus on the carer and care as either work or ethic ignored care as a set of relations involving power and featuring both carers and cared-for” (Williams 2001, p. 476).

The following summarises what she considers the key contribution offered by scholarship from within the second wave: a political ethics of care (Williams 2001, pp. 486–488). The starting point is a recognition that care of the self and care of others are meaningful activities in their own right, and they involve us all, men and women, old and young, able-bodied and disabled. We are neither just givers nor receivers of care. Care is an activity that binds us all. In giving and receiving care, we can, in the right conditions of mutual respect and material support, learn the civic responsibilities of responsibility, trust, tolerance for human limitation and frailties, and acceptance of diversity. Care is part of citizenship. Interdependence is the basis of human interaction, and autonomy and independence are about the capacity for self-determination rather than self-sufficiency. Vulnerability is a human condition, and the experience of vulnerability varies contextually and temporally. Moral worth is attributed to key dimensions of caring relationships such as dignity and the quality of human interaction, whether based upon blood, kinship, sexual intimacy, friendship, collegiality, contract, or service.

Moreover, diversity and plurality in the social process of care are respected and recognised. Inequalities in caregiving and care receiving are exposed through questioning who is benefiting from and who is losing out from existing policies. Inequalities may be constituted through different relations, particularly gender, but also disability, class and occupational status, age, ethnicity, “race,” nationality, religion, sexuality, and marital status.

Care requires time, financial and practical support, and the recognition of choices. Quality, affordability, accessibility, flexibility, choice, and control are the keys to service provision. The importance of an inclusive citizenship in which all those involved in the processes of care have a voice is stressed. Care is not only personal—it is an issue of public and political concern whose social dynamics operate at local, national, and transnational levels. “The reprivatisation of care services, in conditions of women’s increased participation in paid work, has intensified national and international forms of gendered exploitation constituted especially through class, ‘race’/ethnicity and migrant status” (Williams 2001, p. 488).

What relevance does this analysis, developed in a period of apparent economic boom, have for today’s Ireland? It obliges us to begin the difficult and painful task of mapping out what a good life in a good society might involve. O’Toole (2010) has already offered pointers in this direction in relation to thinking about Irish political institutions and broader understandings of the importance of recognising the costs to the planet and the social fabric of pursuing unlimited economic growth as a goal. But we need to go deeper than that. As Williams notes, we are all care receivers and givers—our interdependence is at the heart of our personhood. Therefore, we should start from the recognition that care is a central societal imperative, not a private concern.

As Rush (2007) has noted, throughout the Celtic Tiger, there was a nascent critique that he locates within an ethic of care. For example, there was a critique of an ongoing emphasis on economic growth and universal paid employment, especially from those in disability organisations and carers’ organisations. He noted that the advocacy of an ethic of care did not necessarily mean advocacy of public sector expansion but rather greater public investment in the quality of care in Ireland’s mixed economy of welfare. He suggested that, within Irish welfare debates, the perspective of carers in the home and of volunteers generally had sat uneasily with social policy depictions of family-based care as oppressive to women and a barrier to the autonomy of people with a disability (Rush 2007, p. 58). The challenge, I would suggest, is to continue to debate and to broaden out that critique in the current climate.

Thus, when the male “breadwinner” loses his job in Ireland today, where are the supports to enable him to take on the care of the children or of his ageing parents? There is much concern about current rates of suicide among such men (see Samaritans 2010), with the corresponding policy answer always focused on increasing their employment prospects. Whilst such policy answers are of course important, they are not sufficient. We have the opportunity in such circumstances to rethink dominant constructions of masculinity as well as ensuring that children and fathers develop strong and nurturing relations (Featherstone 2009). In the recession

of the 1980s in the UK, agencies in particularly deprived parts of the UK in which “traditional” male-dominated industries were destroyed started to work with men in order to develop their identities as carers and avert their decline into physical and mental ill health (see Featherstone 2004). There is no sign of such developments in Ireland currently. Services remain focused on mothers, and there have been few attempts to develop those that could cater for fathers’ and men’s needs.

For those young women who, in Duvvury’s (2011) analysis, are leaving the labour market, it is imperative that their care work is recognised in the benefit system and that they do not suffer further down the line in terms of access to pensions.

Finally, there have been some recent attempts by the new government to develop a jobs strategy. However, this is totally devoid of a care dimension with no initiatives to develop strategies that would, for example, positively connote flexible working in order to balance work and care. There are important opportunities to redesign our work and care arrangements in the current context, and these are being missed in the rush to go back to “business as usual.” Developing more flexible arrangements in the context of a societal recognition of the importance of care could free up both men and women and support the giving and receiving of care. During the Celtic Tiger, it was widely reported that Ireland became a very frantic, time-pressed society of commuters and consumers. As O’Toole (2010) notes, the costs ecologically as well as physically and emotionally were considerable. He argues for the importance of acknowledging that resources are finite and precious (in particular, those pertaining to our environment) and that we can construct an Ireland that is fairer in relation to income inequality and more sustainable. To his analysis, I would add the importance of valuing the giving and receiving of care as the mark of a fairer and more sustainable society.

## Concluding Remarks

It has proved extremely difficult to intervene in the dominant debates in Ireland and to suggest that “another way” is possible. When alternatives are proposed, they are generally gender blind and, in particular, the issue of care has remained unrecognised. This is not surprising given the legacy of privatising care responsibilities in the context of a neoliberal adherence to the pursuit of untrammelled economic growth and the corresponding promotion of inequalities. However, the impact of successive austerity measures is to further privatise responsibility, thus inflicting considerable costs especially on those most vulnerable. Calls for a “political ethics of care” to be at the heart of a new Ireland, it is suggested, not only render visible vulnerability and oppression but can make an important contribution to imagining and building a different future.

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# Parent–School Relations in England and the USA: Partnership, Problematized

Kristen D. Nawrotzki

Over the last 45 years, educational inequality has been a focus of national policy and of social scientific study (mostly in that order) in both the USA and England.<sup>1</sup> The compensatory education programs in both countries beginning in the 1960s marked a watershed in terms of government commitment to using education to fight poverty as well as in the role of social science research in educational policymaking (Nawrotzki et al. 2003; Silver and Silver 1991). National education policies and programs in England and the USA have come to focus on promoting achievement-related attitudes and behaviors among parents of children at risk of underachievement in general and on getting teachers to encourage and support the at-home and at-school involvement of these parents in particular.

This long-term policy focus on reducing educational inequality in England and the USA has driven changes in beliefs and practices of parent–school relations at preschool and elementary (primary) levels (Vinovskis 2005). While these policy agendas have mostly been deficit-oriented and therefore aimed at specific (pathologized) populations, they have also redefined parent–school relations in the educational mainstream (Crozier 2000; Cutler 2000). In both countries, parent–school relationships are a key component of national reforms intended to raise educational standards across the board.

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<sup>1</sup>This discussion excludes the rest of the UK owing to their separate systems of education and policymaking.

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Current policies and practices in England and the USA mark not only a redistribution of responsibility but also an increase in the expectations placed on both parents and schools. What were once understood as separate parent–teacher spheres of influence over the child have since been reconceived as overlapping. Whether and how parent–school partnership policies translate into positive educational outcomes is the subject of much government-supported research—and of critique.

At present, English and US educational policy discourses are strikingly similar in their emphasis on parent–school partnership in a wider context of responsabilization. Parent–school relations have become a main locus of the remaking of the relationship between citizen and state in both countries. This has intensified political, social scientific, and public attention to parent–school relationships and to the responsibilities of parents and schools to each other, to the child, and to the larger society as a whole.

## Defining Parent Involvement

In the Anglophone social science and education literature of recent decades, parent involvement (also called parent engagement) has been variously defined to encompass any number of attitudes and behaviors on the part of parents that support a child's attendance at and participation in school. In the most general terms, this is understood to mean a parent or other primary caregiver committing resources to a child's academic development (Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994). This may be as diffuse as parents being mindful of their influence on their child's behaviors and attitudes toward learning in general or as specific as a parent helping a child with homework. It may be home-based, such as monitoring children's television viewing (Clark 1993; Fan and Chen 2001), or it may involve interacting with schools or the larger community, such as e-mailing regularly with their child's teacher, participating in school-based decision making as part of advisory councils or governing bodies, or taking their children to museums and libraries (Pomerantz et al. 2007).

With this diversity in mind, US and other Anglophone research on parent involvement has focused on a wide range of parent actions and attitudes both at home and in conjunction with schools. Henderson and Mapp (2002) have categorized research on parent involvement according to seven broad foci. These are the evaluation of programs and interventions, family activities at home versus at school, home–school interactions, family processes and time use, community effects, culture and class, and community organizing and constituency building. The fact that much of US and English research focuses on the evaluation of parent-involvement programs and interventions (including those of US Head Start and Title I programs, and England's Sure Start programs) reflects the major interest on the part of the state and its research funding bodies in demonstrating the effectiveness of the parent-involvement policies it has instituted.

Judging from the research, educational inequality appears to be generated by a complex combination of home and school effects (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003;



Fan and Chen 2001; Henderson and Berla 1994). Of the home effects, parental attitudes and behaviors regarding a child's learning in general appear to have the highest predictive value when it comes to educational achievement and attainment (Archer 2010; Downey 2002; Englund et al. 2004; Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994; Okagaki and Frensch 1998; Steinberg et al. 1992; Zellman and Waterman 1998). In other words, parenting matters a lot. Although research has conclusively demonstrated the importance of parenting, it is less clear how features of parenting can be disentangled from aspects of family background, including socioeconomic status and culture, in contributing to students' academic achievement. At the same time, research suggests that school effects over and above the quality of instruction—including the behaviors and attitudes of teachers toward parents—can significantly impact educational inequality (Izzo et al. 1999; Lareau 2003; Lawson 2003; Okagaki and Frensch 1998; Vincent 1996; Vincent and Ball 2006). Moreover, while it appears that many compensatory education programs that include parenting and parent-involvement interventions do succeed in improving student outcomes to some degree, it is by no means clear that their parent-related components contributed substantially to this success (Duch 2005; Graue et al. 2004; Senechal and Young 2008).

## School-Based Involvement, Social Class, and Race

Large- and small-scale studies have shown a correlation between social class and student achievement and also a correlation with parent involvement, which itself appears to feedback to student achievement. Most of these correlations appear to hold true independent of race or ethnic background. Ultimately, however, the direct and indirect effects of social class and race on parent involvement remain difficult to disentangle. Middle-class parents tend to have higher-achieving children and also to be more involved in their children's education at home and at school compared with working-class parents. Moreover, middle-class and working-class parents tend to engage in particular types of involvement. As a result, English and US policy has focused on interventions that attempt to make the parent-involvement contexts of educationally at-risk children similar to those (middle-class children) who enjoy relatively high levels of educational attainment and achievement.

Of course, families of all income and education levels and from all ethnic and cultural groups are engaged in supporting their children's learning at home, albeit in different ways. Although surveys show that most parents would like to be involved with their child's school, not all parents are (Williams et al. 2002). This is a problem not only for their children but also for English and US teachers who are bound by law to try to get parents to engage with schools in particular ways.

When it comes to involvement at school, a parent's social class, gender, racial or ethnic background, and family form all appear to influence the degree of her (or his) spontaneous involvement in a child's schooling (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Henderson and Mapp 2002). Studies conducted on elementary schools in the United States (Lareau 1989) and England (Reay 1998; Vincent and Ball 2006, 2007) and on

secondary education in Australia (Connell et al. 1982) have found that middle-class parents tend to be more involved in schooling than others. More specifically, white, middle-class, partnered mothers tend to be the most highly involved in their children's education, whereas parents with ethnic minority and nonmajority language backgrounds, those with low socioeconomic status, single parents, and fathers in general are less likely to be involved in schools (Lareau and Horvat 1999). These class-based differences in parent involvement correlate with class-based differences in educational outcomes, such that middle-class parents'—especially mothers'—involvement in their children's education and schooling has been tacitly understood by policymakers as the ideal (Crozier 1997; de Carvalho 2001). Much research has focused on understanding this phenomenon and on evaluating programs that attempt to get working-class parents and those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds involved in schools like their white, middle-class counterparts.

## **Barriers to Involvement**

There are numerous structural and interpersonal barriers to parent involvement in schools, many of which disproportionately impact on parents from socioeconomically disadvantaged and minority backgrounds (Lightfoot 1978). Such barriers include logistical considerations such as time, timing, cost, or the availability of childcare or transportation (Chin and Newman 2002); previous negative experiences with schools (Reay 1998; Vincent 1996); lack of requisite skills such as literacy or fluency in the language of the school or a lack of confidence in one's skills (Stoker 1996; Williams et al. 2002); not feeling or being welcomed or being welcomed only on the school's terms despite a school's "partnership" rhetoric (Crozier 1999; Nechyba et al. 1999); teacher resistance (Institute for Public Policy Research 2000); and the use of unreliable or unidirectional channels of communication to coordinate involvement (Baker 1997; Mannan and Blackwell 1992). Such findings are of particular import to efforts to promote parent involvement in schools.

## **Family–School Partnerships**

The most widespread and comprehensive efforts to overcome barriers to parent involvement in the USA and in England in recent decades have centered on the concept of the family–school partnership (FSP), also called the family–school–community partnership. For the most part, the understanding of partnership has been based on a model elaborated by Joyce Epstein and her (US) National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The NNPS comprises more than 1,000 schools, many of them enacting partnerships under US federal government stipulations for compensatory education programs; a great number outline their partnerships with the parent–school compacts required by law (Funkhouser et al. 1998; NNPS 2010).

Epstein's FSP model understands families, schools, and communities as having overlapping spheres of influence on students and their learning (Epstein 1995). According to the model, this influence translates more or less directly into overlapping responsibility for student learning. This marks a fundamental change from traditional separate-sphere conceptions of parent and teacher roles (Swap 1993). Well-executed FSPs support beliefs and behaviors that positively influence parent involvement. The acts of instituting and maintaining a partnership can reduce attitudinal barriers to parent involvement, encourage active role constructions for involvement, help parents feel effective, and show them that their contributions are not only wanted but essential (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2003; Lawson 2003).

In practice, FSPs embody a philosophy and a set of guidelines for establishing a conscious, systematic, goal-oriented, and equity-focused relationship between parents and schools, a means by which other matters relating to the school and to home–school interactions can be determined. As Epstein has explained, “we want [family–school–community partnership] to be as normal a part of classroom and school organization as curriculum, instruction, assessments, and other standard components of school improvement. It's not something that's extra or off to the side” (as quoted in Kreider 2000, p. 1). Furthermore, the actual strategies used and goals sought are determined by the partners—thus, they vary from school to school, from community to community.

The work of FSPs is expected to focus on each of the six types of involvement as defined by Epstein (1995), namely, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Potential strategies for any given partnership are expected to be drawn from these six involvement types. Each partnership's choice of involvement types, of programs, or of practices of school improvement is supposed to be guided by good practice as identified by research, but more than that, each partnership's decisions are to be based on the stated and perceived needs of the participants in local context.

## **Partnership as Policy in the USA and England**

US and English national education policies have for decades included clauses about encouraging parental involvement—and even about schools welcoming parents as “partners” in their children's education (Bridges 2010; Crozier 2000; Cutler 2000), but only in the last 15 years have they prescribed parent–school partnership in detail. Since the 1970s, English education policy sought to increase the means by which parents were able to participate in children's schooling and school-related decision making, and this continued apace through the Conservative and New Labour governments of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s (Bridges 2010). For example, New Labour's School Standards and Framework Act of 1998 increased the numbers and powers of parents on school governing bodies and called for the publication of voluntary national homework guidelines, which were issued soon thereafter (to great protest on the part of teachers' unions) (DfEE 1998). This was followed by

the launch in 1999 of home–school agreements, unenforceable contracts to be composed and signed by parents, children, and schools together, outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party. Subjects of agreement in the contracts include the assignment and completion of homework, student behavior within and outside of school, the identification of student problems, the communication of academic requirements, and the sharing and incorporation of the concerns and interests of all parties. According to then Education Minister Jacqui Smith, “In signing these agreements, parents will be acknowledging their partnership with the school to help educate their child” (Coldwell et al. 2003, p. 6). All of this would, it was hoped, raise student attainment and increase school effectiveness while ensuring that all students and parents received equal treatment. The government’s *Every Parent Matters* document, issued in 2007, concretized the policy focus on parents and was intended to help teachers to stimulate parent participation in schools and to encourage effective parenting more generally (DfES 2007).

The use of home–school agreements in elementary and secondary schools was reinforced repeatedly in the 2000s, including New Labour attempts to make the contracts legally enforceable and a requirement for school admission (Sugden 2009). With the end of the New Labour government in May 2010, this did not come to pass. However, based on the Conservative Party’s manifesto and early coalition statements, the coalition government looked to continue the home–school partnership efforts of its successors and to increase “parent power,” not least in the intensification of accountability measures and the institution of parent-founded, publicly funded schools very similar to charter schools in the US context (Cameron 2010; H. M. Government (England) 2010).

In the USA, the 2002 federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act marked the first time that federal law defined parental involvement explicitly, calling it:

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including assisting their child’s learning; being actively involved in their child’s education at school; serving as full partners in their child’s education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and the carrying out of other activities .... (USA 107th Congress 2002, Sect. 9101)

Among other things, every school district in receipt of Title I (federal compensatory education) funds has to work with parents to develop district- and school-level parent-involvement programs, to deal with and report parent complaints, to reduce barriers to parent participation in all aspects of schooling, to reserve part of their budget for parent-focused activities including parent education, and to coordinate parent-involvement activities with those of other programs. Under the law, districts receiving Title I money have to train parents and teachers to be effective partners, conduct activities, and communicate with parents in ways that encourage parents to participate as full partners in their children’s education.

In addition to the extensive parent–school partnership requirements, the NCLB encouraged schools to maximize parent participation by paying for parents’ transportation and childcare costs so that they could attend meetings and training sessions, training parents to appeal to other parents, conducting home visits, engaging

community-based organizations and businesses to support partnerships, and implementing well-researched model approaches to improving parental involvement (USA 107th Congress 2002). Indeed, much recent US research on parent–school relationships focuses on the evaluation of family–school partnership models that attempt to meet the terms of the NCLB, which has been awaiting reauthorization since 2007.

## Partnership, Problematicized

Generally speaking, Epstein’s FSP model appears to presume that the more comprehensive, equitable, and enthusiastic the partnership, the better the results for students and others. To this end, the NNPS provides guidelines and recommendations for what makes a high-quality partnership, including an emphasis on equity and inclusiveness, mutual respect and trust, and the presence of well-trained teacher leaders who engage in effective, ongoing outreach to parents and, in effect, coach the partnership from within. Partners must agree to share rights and responsibilities (Epstein 2001; Epstein et al. 2002). Anecdotal evidence and case studies of partnership programs such as those within NNPS in the USA and those in Sure Start programs in England suggest that they are indeed met with enthusiasm by participants, who feel that they are making a difference (Epstein 2005; Funkhouser et al. 1998; Gustafsson and Driver 2005; Myers et al. 2004).

As Hallgarten (2000) has noted, there is no “policy gap” regarding parent involvement because English and US educational policies appear unanimous in support of it, especially in the form of partnership. What remains, however, is an “evidence gap,” a lack of reliable information about the real impact of much of what US and English policy prescribes. Little is known about the effects on student achievement (if any) of partnership as an organizational form in education nor about the benefits and costs to participants themselves. These matters do not appear to be addressed in NNPS publications on partnerships, even when their titles indicate otherwise (e.g., Sheldon 2002). And despite an array of positive anecdotal reports in NNPS-related and other literature, there is little evidence that FSPs are a successful model for parent–school relations where improved academic achievement is the goal (Chavkin 2001).

In England and the USA, parental participation in FSPs is, for the most part, not legally required. As with far less intensive forms of parental involvement, and despite their attention to removing barriers to involvement, efforts at partnership tend to attract those parents who are already keen and to repel those who are not. Those who are attracted often have very different ideas of what partnership means and how much commitment a partnership might entail (Franklin and Streeter 1995). Measures such as formalized contracts between parents and schools (as required in England and Wales since 1999) do not appear to help (Hood 2001).

For some, a main goal of partnership is the reconfiguration of power relations between the home and the school (or the mother and the teacher) in the service of

children's education and of the community at large. In many cases, however, such redistribution of power within the school occurs only symbolically, as when parent representatives to school bodies are in fact given little say or feel ill equipped to actually contribute (Epstein 2001). It may not even be possible for partnerships to transform traditional power relations between teachers and parents (or among different groups of parents), because structural, material, and ideological constraints continue to shape participants' behaviors and beliefs (Fine 1993). Despite the rhetoric of partnership, parents tend to defer to the professional authority of teachers, especially in diverse and disadvantaged communities (Beck and Murphy 1996; Tomlinson 1992). Indeed, claims of partnership may be particularly exploitative of parents in those communities for other reasons as well (Lawson 2003). This is particularly worrying given that partnership programs especially target these parents in particular whose children's schools face multiple challenges in educating students to high standards (Epstein and Hollifield 1996).

The exploitation of parents under the banner of partnership (and other parent-involvement schemes) is not limited to those of low socioeconomic status, however, as parent interviews have revealed:

The reality of parent-school partnership ... was not quite the give-and-take they were led to expect. While the schools were happy to rope parents into doing more and more supervision and taking over more and more of the teaching and drilling at home, the parents had no say whatsoever in the content or the methods of their children's education, either at school or at home. (Bennett 2007, no page)

Thus, the redistribution of responsibility does not equate to a redistribution of power. And despite the depiction of teachers "roping parents into doing more," in fact parent-involvement programs of all types—but partnership-based ones in particular—may be seen as "roping" teachers into more work as well, making them responsible for parents as well as for students (Ingersoll 2003; IPPR 2000; Lieberman and Miller 1999). What some parents and teachers experience as "empowerment" and "professional role enhancement" through partnership is experienced by others as merely additional burdens on time and other limited resources (Mawhinney 1998). And, in any case, partnership models must operate within larger bureaucratic and power structures that remain the same as before. School-based partnership as such provides neither teachers nor parents with more control over curriculum requirements, standards, or high-stakes testing regimes (Spring 1993).

## **Accountability, Responsibilization, and Parent–School Partnership**

In the 1960s and 1970s, policymakers in both countries not only paid attention to educational inequality but also tried to reduce it by means of compensatory education programs including whole families. These efforts were accompanied and shaped by social scientific research and persisted across administrations and political parties. In the 1980s, driven by similar economic and political exigencies, both

the USA and England were sites of backlash against so-called progressive education. In both countries, 1980s and 1990s neoliberal educational reforms touted the virtues of competition in the educational marketplace, thus shaping parents as consumers, as users of education. In addition to increasing school choice options (which have not been a subject of this chapter), English and US educational legislation and programs emphasized standards-based education and accountability, two features that have since become central to state-sector education in both contexts. Responsibilization, another feature of recent US and English social policy, also has significant implications for how family–school relationships are understood and made manifest.

Although various definitions have been attributed to the term, accountability in education is essentially a means by which the public (parents and the government on behalf of taxpayers) check whether school teachers and administrators are fulfilling their responsibilities. This may comprise the surveillance of teachers' work as such, but more commonly it focuses on the products of this work, outcomes in the form of students' standardized test results (Anderson 2005). From its roots in cost accounting, the concept of accountability includes a consideration of cost and of value for money, and teachers are seen as providing a service, as adding value (or not) to students (Brown 1990; Spring 2002). In the USA and in England, accountability appeared as a watchword of 1980s educational reforms, and it has remained a focus of educational policy ever since.

The US and English policy emphasis on raised standards and accountability (as opposed to an emphasis on improvements in the conditions of schooling) implies that teachers and students are not working hard enough in schools (Spring 2002). Increased parent involvement therefore provides, theoretically, at least, a means by which parents can police the work of teachers while motivating children to work harder within and outside of school (McGhee Hassrick and Schneider 2009; Powell and Edwards 2005). Case studies suggest that it is the middle-class parents who perform surveillance of teachers and ensure that classroom practices benefit their own children. In contrast, parents with less cultural capital are more likely to be mentored, monitored, and (in a Foucauldian sense) disciplined by teachers, thereby perpetuating educational inequalities (Crozier 1998; McGhee Hassrick and Schneider 2009; Powell and Edwards 2005). This is borne out by the results of large-scale survey research, revealing that accountability does correlate with higher test scores but does not necessarily narrow the achievement gap (Hanushek and Raymond 2004).

The quest for accountability in US and English educational reform was supported across political party lines and gained ground alongside a neoliberal, market-oriented conception of public services in the 1980s and 1990s. In both nations, government policies increased the extent to which schools are forced to compete for funding, for students, or for both. Parents have been granted increasing power to make choices within state-sector education (again, with the result of perpetuating educational inequalities; see Ball 1993), and increasing numbers have opted out of schooling entirely, deciding instead to educate their child at home (Hopwood et al. 2007; NCES 2004). When policy regimes view parents as consumers in an educational

marketplace, parents must represent their own children's needs and be active in the selection, management, and delivery of educational services (Rayner et al. 2000). Parents as consumers have rights as consumers; they are expected to "oversee" the "product process" by questioning the actions and practices of the teacher, the content and organization of instruction, and anything else they feel might influence the quality of the educational product (Crozier 1997, 2000). This consumerization of education (as of other public services) has resulted not only in a reduction in professional judgment and autonomy for teachers but also in a privileging of private interests over public ones because parents as consumers use choice and involvement to assert their own cultural values (Harris and von Bijsterveld 1993; Vincent 1996). The collectivist focus of the state—including any claims to equity—thus takes a backseat to infamously unreliable market forces (Clarke 2005). *Caveat emptor*, indeed.

In their dual emphases on accountability and parental involvement, US and English policymakers may be seen to have responsabilized parents vis-à-vis the schools. Responsibilization describes the process by which individuals are held responsible for something that in the past was either the responsibility of the state or else was not seen as a responsibility at all (O'Malley 2009). This is not necessarily bad; in a very real way, responsabilization processes can be seen as creating more autonomous citizens engaged in powerful forms of agency because they exercise both rights and responsibilities (Giddens 1998; Gustafsson and Driver 2005). However, responsabilization discourses such as those arising from recent neoliberal political agendas in the USA and England tend to imply failure on the part of the responsabilized subject; that is, they tend to blame the victim for having needed the government to intervene in the first place (O'Malley 2009).

In the context of parent-school relationships, responsabilization has meant that both teachers *and parents* are held accountable (or blame each other) for educational outcomes. It has also meant a resurgence of parent education and training because responsabilized parents need to know what test scores mean, how to support children's learning at home, how to deal with school as bureaucracy, and so on.<sup>2</sup> This results in marginalized parents remaining marginalized because they predictably fail to fulfill their increasingly complex responsibilities. They fail to be "properly" involved at home, and they do not or cannot contribute to schools. They may fail to make wise educational choices on behalf of their children, and they are unlikely to be able to hold teachers accountable for their children's educational outcomes. After all, as responsabilized parents, they, too, must be held accountable. In this way, parent involvement can be seen as a way for the state to take itself out of the equation, to free itself from having to improve the conditions or structures of education (de Carvalho 2001). The "empowered" family-school partnership thus becomes the fall guy for the failures of the state (Fine 1993).

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<sup>2</sup>See Val Gillies's chapter "Family Policy and the Politics of Parenting: From Function to Competence" in this same volume.



This is not to say that parent involvement is necessarily bad, for there are many reasons to think it can be extremely beneficial for children, for parents, and for schools and communities as well. However, as Maria Eulina Pessoa de Carvalho (2001) has explained, the legislation of parent involvement exposes three substantial contradictions in beliefs and practices of schooling and education policy. First, the very fact of parent-involvement policy means that parent involvement does not occur on its own, or if it does occur, it is not extensive enough. In practice, parent involvement appears as a tool in the competition for success; the involvement of some parents is rewarded in comparison to other parents' noninvolvement. Second, the fact that parent involvement appears to make a difference in student outcomes shows that schools are organized in a way that makes them unable to ensure student success within the school's place and time. Policies requiring parent involvement serve to legitimize these inefficient and inequitable organizational and curricular forms. And, finally, despite decades of research, it remains unclear whether parental involvement—especially in the form of partnership seen in US and English national education policy—is even viable given the structures, organizational capacity, and cultures of schools.

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# Family and Welfare State Change: Challenges for Education

Andreas Lange

## Analysing the Challenges for Education Going Beyond Popular Rhetoric

“Education” has become a very important formula in the self-descriptive repertoire of modern societies. It is also seen as the fundamental means to improve societies and as the decisive tool for overcoming a host of social problems and social pathologies such as social inequality. Lastly, state leaders and others think that education provides the best resources for succeeding in the processes of international competitiveness. But, simultaneously, the real educational assets of especially the young generation are evaluated as not optimal. These negative evaluations can be found in many media presentations in Germany today, and they deal with very diverse issues—beginning with the necessary reform of the systems of early education and ending with the, in a comparative frame, seemingly underdeveloped tertiary system. Another bundle of factors considered relevant for reforming educational processes and institutions is located in the family. Critics say that parents are not fulfilling their educational duty and are unable to raise their children adequately in terms of the necessary cognitive, motivational, and emotional competencies for a successful career in the educational system. These arguments are to be found not only in the public arena but also among many professionals such as teachers, as Toppe (2010a, b) and Richter (2010) have shown empirically. Mainly, the expansion of childcare and of all-day schools is propagated as a promising remedy for the lack of competencies in children from the lower social strata and as a means to reconcile work and family.

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Critically discussing these theses of family rhetoric (Lüscher et al. 1989) and educational rhetoric, I want to show that the developments in the realms of society, families, and education are not linear, but equivocal and ambiguous. Therefore, implementing a new form of educational arrangements and new educational contents in the setting of all-day schools faces many challenges. As Du Bois-Reymond (2010) has recently remarked, the issues today are not ones concerning national aspects of education, and they are not confined to teachers and educational professions. Education is discussed on a supranational level, and the discourses on education are mixed up with labour market and social policy topics. We have to delve into these complex thematic connections before we can adequately understand the hopes, challenges, and investments made in educational systems. The “large reforms” of the educational systems in Europe (Gogolin et al. 2011), especially the all-day school (Stecher 2011), are intended primarily and officially to improve the performance of school systems following the “PISA shock” by raising educational performance especially in children with a less favourable family background—but there are many more or less hidden agendas involved, and these can be understood only within a broader critical sociological perspective.

The rest of this chapter is based on three propositions:

*Proposition 1.* Concerning the design, the curricular contents, and the manifold formal and informal educational and care processes of the new school system, it is not solely the changing family as such that has to be considered in detail. Still more relevant are the changing contexts such as the ecologies of the family. Families themselves have to cope with many new challenges—“doing family” becomes a very demanding project (Jurczyk et al. 2009), and not seldom processes of learning and education in the families are disturbed by social forces generated primarily in the economic system—long working hours of both parents, atypical work schedules (Jurczyk and Lange 2007), family-indifferent social systems, and new demands from schools and other public institutions. These developments themselves have to be seen in the light of a reduction of the welfare state in terms of monetary and infrastructural provisions.

*Proposition 2.* A new promising route for reflecting the agenda of reforming the school systems, embedded in the discussion of the new welfare state, could be to connect these lines of arguments with the discussion on the societal organization of care (Brückner 2011; Toppe 2010a, b). This holistic point of view deepens the understanding of the new challenges for instigating successful socialization processes in families, schools, and other institutions because it encompasses more elements than a purely human capital view on school reforms.

*Proposition 3.* The performance of pupils in the school system is but one important dependent variable when discussing the success of all-day schools. For a more comprehensive picture, we also need indicators such as well-being of the pupils and their parents and the effects of reforms to the school systems on the reconciliation of work and family, and lastly, we have to ask if and how human agency and capabilities can be influenced positively by the structure and content of the all-day school.

## Social Trends in Late Modernity and Their Consequences

### *The New Economy: Market Dynamics Dominating Other Social Logics*

The new, “post-Fordist” economy is the most important force of social change in the welfare state, families, and educational systems. In stark contrast to Fordist times, mass production has become less relevant, and flexible production has become an important challenge for firms and workers (Sennett 1998). This deserves closer scrutiny:

- On the one hand, the internationalization and simultaneous liberalization and regulation of labour markets (Pries 2010) offer a host of opportunities for getting a job. On the other hand, everybody has to compete within a new situation without lifelong guarantees. To conserve one’s agency on globalized labour markets does not just mean to accumulate more and more knowledge. Multilingualism, intercultural competencies, and the readiness to move geographically are also necessary ingredients for a successful career for more and more professions and jobs.
- The transformation from an industrial to a service society generates and yields new profiles of competencies. The elements of these profiles can be circumscribed as a high degree of theoretical knowledge, communicative knowledge, and communicative practices. These are intertwined with massive use of the Internet and personal computers. Modern parents take these competencies and mentalities of a fast and connected work life into their homes (Walther and Lukoschat 2008).

Beckert (2009, p. 185) augments these observations with the general conceptual thesis that the dynamics of modern capitalist society, including its functional subsystems such as the educational system, the family, the media, the welfare state, and so forth, are dominated by the logics of the economy. The functioning of the economy in terms of the growth rate of the GNP (gross national product) is seen as the *ultima ratio* for all other systems: “Competitive markets are not only the dominant mode of regulation in the production and allocation of goods, but the logics of competition expand to other societal domains” (Beckert 2009, p. 185, translated). He further develops the argument that one consequence of this is that more and more social relations are also framed as competitive. By providing money for households and families and by providing labour, and because of the necessary permanent change through innovations, the economy has been the dominant force in the development of modern societies. But Beckert (2009) is far from propagating a deterministic perspective; he stresses the resistance and the historically grown institutional logics of other functional subsystems. In this light, the economization of society and its subsystems is an open process that has to be researched in further detail. Some of the concrete impacts of economization will be shown below:

The economization, in coalition with the new “activating” welfare state, has generated more social inequality between various segments of the population. Especially



children have become the victims of the reconfiguration of modes of production, the labour market, and policies. Longitudinal data for Germany show a growing rate of households with children living in poverty since the 1990s as Groh-Samberg (2009) has shown with data from the German Socio-Economic Panel. As in other modern states, these poverty rates vary significantly according to the family structures (McLanahan 2004; Träger 2009). Children of single parents have a higher risk of growing up with deprived economic resources, which are a main cause of the many disadvantages of growing up poor. Another fact is the relative disadvantage of families versus “singles”. But these trends also need to be interpreted with care: They cannot be read in the sense of all families faring economically worse than people without children. But these data are often abused in rhetorical discourses that blame new lifestyles and new orientations for all the ills of modern society. Families themselves are an economically heterogeneous group—but these facts are ignored, and frequently “wars” are constructed between families and non-families or between the generations. These rhetorical constructions distract the attention of the public from the massive social inequalities between social classes that have become greater over the course of economization (Butterwegge 2009; Klundt 2007).

The negative consequences of poverty and deprivation have often been replicated in research (see Beisenherz 2008). New data even show negative morphological consequences in the architecture of important brain structures (Hackmann and Farah 2009; Raizada et al. 2008). Concerning the mechanisms responsible for the negative effects, two mediators are currently being debated: One path of the transfer of economic deprivation into the personality of the children is the disturbance of the quality of familial interactions. Because of these interferences, processes of “doing family” (Jurczyk and Lange 2002) are partly interrupted, and children do not receive the necessary emotional stimulation and security—causing behaviour difficulties that are themselves predictors of problems in the educational system. The second path runs from economic deprivation across a worsening of the intellectual quality of the home environments (computers and other learning material cannot be provided) to negative effects on the cognitive capacities of the children (Huston and Bentley 2010).

### ***The New Insecurity of the Middle Classes or the Colonialization of the Lifeworld by Educational Aspirations***

Another factor reaching out into families, especially in the middle classes, is the diffuse insecurity over job stability and the anxiety about losing one’s job (Lengfeld and Hirschle 2009). These parents understand the main remedy against these risks to the future of their children to be more and better education (Vincent and Ball 2007). According to the specific class position and resources, we can ascertain multiple efforts to gain more educational resources for their own children with the side effect of more segregation between the social classes (Henry-Huthmacher 2008; Wolf 2009, p. 130). One impressive indicator for these forced efforts in Germany is

the boom in private schools. Parents hope that these private schools can provide their children with additional qualifications that will make the decisive difference in the future in terms of getting good grades and a job (Knötig 2010).

Parents in this context today have to cope with new expectations from the state, the general public, and their children. On the one hand, the norm of promoting the children's well-being and their socialization is deeply internalized—on the other hand, the felt differences between this norm and day-to-day family living raise permanent feelings of ambivalence and guilt. One way to handle these emotions and aspirations is a permanent and intensive promotion of the interests, capabilities, and competencies of the children beneath the curriculum of the school: The empirical data for Germany are impressive (Müller and Spieß 2009), showing a vast amount of financial and time investments in these areas.

### ***The “Brave New World of Work” and Its Ambivalent Impact on the Family***

The new economy does not just penetrate directly into some families by cutting economic resources. Other impacts result indirectly from the new forms of working and producing in an “accelerated culture” (Rosa 2005) and a culture of work intensification (Nolan 2002). These have numerous positive and negative impacts on workers with and without family obligations (Kratzer et al. 2011). First, it has to be underlined that flexibilization of working time and non-standard working schedules makes the synchronization of the everyday activities of families not only more open and less rigid but also more complicated. Second, it can be shown that the new organization of work, implicating more autonomy but also more responsibility for the working process and the work product, also has sublime ramifications, so-called spillovers for interactions in families. Parents' time squeeze is more than the quantitative problem of too little time for too many activities; it frequently means role conflicts, stress, and the challenges of multitasking and balancing the contradictory time logics and demands of family- and job-related activities (Jurczyk and Lange 2007, pp. 223–225).

This can be demonstrated by some results from the study *Entgrenzte Arbeit—entgrenzte Familie* [Blurring boundaries between family and work] which was funded by the Hans Böckler Stiftung (Jurczyk et al. 2009) Here, I focus on the effects of blurring boundaries on the informal educational processes within families (Lange 2010), which are of basic relevance for other educational processes in, for example, schools. The interviews with parents working in demanding jobs elaborate on the issue of being exhausted by permanent work and overwork. Many parents often could not provide sufficient care and self-care because of their work demands. But exactly this undermines a special quality of the informal educational processes in families: their casual character. US research, operating with video observations and interviews very close to the everyday life of families (Kremer-Sadlik and Paugh 2007), has been able to reconstruct that parents and children prefer and very positively

evaluate spontaneous episodes as very important and rewarding family times. Interactions during mealtimes, while cleaning the house, and while sitting in front of the TV seem to catalyse valuable educational episodes. But due to the results of research on the blurring of boundaries between work and the family, it is precisely these qualities and spontaneous episodes of “relaxed” education that are often hindered or prevented by the physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion of working parents in the “brave new economy”. “Yes, they come to me. The little one says father to me eight times. I attend to this partly, but I don’t give an answer, because my thoughts are far away” (Mr. Miller, retail manager, Munich; for this and other case studies, see Jurczyk et al. 2009).

Working in projects and long working hours combined with variants of mobility and new family constellations along with working mothers—this all demands a planned and intentional construction of common times for doing family. Often, new media and technologies are used for this undertaking in the “connected family” (Christensen 2009). However, because of these facts, the reliability and the “standby” quality of interactions with other family members, designating the special character of a good family life, are in no sense either natural or obvious. Additionally, a host of research projects by developmental psychologists hints at many other negative effects of atypical working times and long working hours especially for young children; one important path being the disruption of family rituals (Jacob et al. 2008; Strazdins et al. 2006).

In summary, the “brave new world of work” interferes not always, but in many cases, with basic qualities of a good family life, and the regulation of these impacts is an important future challenge for family policy (Streeck 2009). In Germany, these aspects have been noticed broadly, and the last report on the family (BMFSFJ 2007) designates a whole chapter to the topic of “time and family”. The new report (BMFSFJ 2011) concentrates as a whole on “time for responsibility”. The 2007 report underlines that besides discussing the merits of “flexibility” for family life, there is a need to acknowledge that flexibility per se is not the only key to alleviate the costs of the new economy for families. There are many other points to be optimized, such as the autonomous choice of working hours. And, as will be discussed below, new infrastructures have to be invented that support families by giving them more resources for doing family as they want to do it. In this context, the concept of doing family has proven to be a useful approach for research and policy because it concentrates on the interactions between people within the family and on their practices in everyday life and over the life course. From this perspective (Jurczyk and Lange 2002; Lange and Alt 2009), families are seen to be constructed through multiple forms of interaction from physical and emotional interactions to cognitive, social, spatial, and media-related interactions and from interactions involving cohesion and solidarity as well as conflicts, demands, stress, and even violence. This analytical frame can be used to detect that work–family conflicts are far more than certain “attitudes” or “preferences”, but that they have material and practical impacts that represent sophisticated challenges for all domains of social policy.

### ***The New Welfare State, the Adult Worker Model, and New Mixes of Private and Public Care***

Closely connected to developments of the economy, the welfare states in the western world have seen a dramatic change in terms of their financial basis and their concepts of involving the citizens in producing welfare and quality of life. Ignoring all the variations in the concrete models of welfare state arrangements (Esping-Andersen 1990), which can be justified by new analyses of the dynamic convergence of the OECD welfare states (Schmitt and Starke 2010), one can say that important family-relevant trends are the cutting back of social expenditures, the strategy of social investment, and corresponding activation of the young and the old. Also it has to be noticed (Knijn and Smit 2009) that the gender-equality agenda has been subordinated to the focus on creating competitive economies in the EU.

A very important figure in this context is the not fully implemented and unambiguous idea of the adult worker model (Daly 2011), which is also an explicit goal in the EU agendas. The male breadwinner model has not only been delegitimized because of gender egalitarian ideas, but it is thought that under the new volatile economic conditions, families have to rely on two pay cheques. There has also been a shift away from a generous giving of resources to people and populations in need to a more demanding welfare inclusion mode (Lessenich 2008), with the corresponding reprogramming of the normative ideals of being a good citizen.

Closely connected to these developments, the family has become a special target of the new welfare state. As Ostner (2007) has underlined, there is a new interest in familial solidarity, a tendency to treat both parents as workers, and a move towards greater welfare mixes. Ostner (2007, p. 54) notes a new institutionalization of children and women—the new quality being its “utilitarian drive” and its affinity to social investment measures. Expressed more directly, because of the new, neoliberal outlook on children, parents, and families as potential human capital for the competition on the world markets (Olk and Hübenthal 2011), families are observed intensively for their “production qualities”. All-day schools are then no more than one further tool for attaining the goal of improving human capital.

The discussions about all-day schools in this context refer to these new mixtures of social investment strategies, markets, family, and institutions. A special emphasis is placed on the conditions and consequences of including mothers in the labour market. According to the most prominent argumentative scheme, all-day schools are needed for a better reconciliation of work and family (BMFSFJ 2011)—a parallel argument has been the legitimization for the extension of early childcare.

Without doubt, an improved reconciliation of work and life for mothers is a positive potential effect of all-day schools, with another positive side effect of nourishing the cognitive development of school children through their working mothers (Röhr-Sendlmeier 2009). Nevertheless, one should not forget to theorize other possible side effects of all-day schools. First, there is a need to underline that research and policy should pay attention to the new time conditions in Germany for doing family in the case of two working parents and children attending institutionalized settings

of school and care. Time policy is an underdeveloped, but promising area for future conceptual analyses of the interactions between families, all-day schools, and the welfare state, which can be seen paradigmatically in the case of the Scandinavian countries (Lundahl 2008).

Second, one has to be aware of new challenges and changes for a professionalization of care and education in the settings of the all-day school: This point has been made impressively by Toppe (2010b, p. 80, translated): “Because of children spending more time in care and education, reproductive achievements, which were traditionally attributed to the family especially the mothers, become strongly institutionalized and a public responsibility.” For women, this means that, on the one hand, they gain public support for the care of their children through the institutionalized settings of all-day schools, and on the other hand, these public care institutions become an important field of labour market opportunity.

Reflecting on the well-being and socialization of the children, these new configurations of private and public care should be reflected upon carefully. Toppe (2010a) calls for the professional development of a productive mixture of education. She especially stresses the need to conceptualize all-day schools as places for refining public care relations. This professional refinement of care relations could then be an important cornerstone for the long needed societal recognition of all care activities as important building blocks for the coproduction of welfare between public institutions and private settings. “Care in this way could be stripped of gender-specific attributions and it could gain recognition as valuable work and as a contribution to the social fabric” (Toppe 2010b, p. 83, translated).

Finally, such a conceptual approach that is open to detect potential positive effects of all-day schools is able to steer attention away from understanding all-day schools mainly in terms of better grades and qualifications. Seeing all-day schools as places of care, other specific human interactions, and material resources makes it possible to look at the potential contribution of all-day schools to the development of the capabilities and agency of children and youth (Grundmann and Dravenau 2010; Ziegler 2011). If it is true that children and youth in Germany will spend more and more time in these settings, there is a need to carefully monitor which effects this has for their life conduct and their life chances. By conceptualizing and evaluating conditions and social mechanisms that influence people’s freedom of choice and action and their opportunities to attain valued states of being, the conceptual frames of “capability” and “agency” offer new insights into the everyday processes in all-day schools and their interactions with processes in other settings and social systems such as the family and the peer group. Furthermore, these frames can be used to develop criteria for the optimization of educational settings beyond only grades and test scores. For instance, all-day schools should provide pupils with opportunities to exercise as much agency as possible—a necessary ingredient to cope successfully with the challenges of modern societies. All-day schools should also provide spaces for the development of life plans and aspirations that are otherwise determined and often restricted by the social class to which children and youth belong. The heuristic value of thinking about all-day schools in terms of “agency” and “capabilities” is not restricted to the children. A new research focus in the literature on tensions

between family life and work life demonstrates the utility of applying this perspective to questions of working time and working conditions (Hobson 2011). Seen in this light, all-day schools cannot just provide fathers and mothers with the opportunity to work because their school-aged children are cared for: All-day schools are also an important contribution to the capabilities of these parents because they can go to work without having to think continually about the well-being of their children in the school setting and because the time for family after work and after school is free from obligations stemming from the educational demands of the school. All this said, it is clear that the fulfilment of the ambitious aims figured out here depends on investing vast amounts of ideal and material resources in the structures of all-day schools. But the more important point made here is that we need to broaden our focus on possible effects of all-day schools to raise all their potentials.

### *Media and Popular Culture as Challenges for Education*

Still another, often neglected challenge for the educational processes in schools and families is located in the cultural sphere. We are confronted with an explosion of media and goods of popular culture. These influences are penetrating more and more into families today. Today's children, youth, and adults live in a culture of consumption and events. Diagnoses of an "aesthetic economy" (Böhme 2008) underline that aesthetization is not an ephemeral trend, but that it is an important driving force of modern economies in developed countries. Concretely, doing family today implicates using media and the products of popular culture. Parents and children discuss while watching TV, communicate with email and SMS, and produce homepages presenting their family to the public. Children today are consumers from an early age on, and they also become "users" of computer programmes, advertising, and so forth very early in their life course. From early on, they identify with brand labels, and it is especially youth who are the main target of the communication and media industries. Being aware of the potential negative impact of these trends, modern childhood and media studies have developed a more balanced view on these processes than the classic German critique of the "*Kulturindustrie*" (Böhme 2008). Popular culture and the media are now understood as valuable semiotic resources for the development of identity, competencies, and everyday life. Ekström (2009) summarizes the new outlook on childhood and media studies by stating that children are not just passive beings while consuming, but are actively involved in negotiations about styles, preferences, and identity. The choosing of products is part of displaying a certain individual and familial identity.

Taking this elaborated view on the "impact" of the media seriously, families and all-day schools have to cope with new tasks. Children and youth have to be supported on their way to a reflective mode of using the new and dynamically developing popular culture, which itself can stimulate the development of a bundle of competencies (Grunert 2005). One important aspect of these new media developments is the erosion of the authoritative knowledge of the school curriculum (Hengst 2008) because

children and youth can gain information from many sources besides the school. Therefore, educational strategies in families and all-day schools have to be designed to allow the inclusion of the new forms of knowledge and content in the Internet while not over-instrumentalizing the media and popular culture.

### *The Changing Family: Some Remarks*

Which relevant developments in the family are important for our understanding of new challenges for education? Both some structural and some more relational changes have to be reported (cf. Uhlendorff et al. 2011). First, we have to note a new style of communication between children and parents. Commands and directives have been partially replaced by negotiations (Büchner et al. 1997) and by very subtle “activity contracts” (Aronsson and Cekaite 2011). The democratization of decisions within families with its positive side effects for children (Alt et al. 2005) makes communication in the family and in schools a demanding time- and energy-consuming task.

Second, research on more structural aspects by Lauterbach (1998) and by Bertram (2002) on multigenerational family structures and the longevity of family members has the following implications for educational processes in all-day schools:

- Children have to be provided with tools for coping with a long life in economic terms, giving them good chances for succeeding on the future labour markets and providing them with the intellectual tools to handle economic resources in the prospect of a long life.
- Children have to be provided with life skills enabling them to live a good and healthy life. Living for 80–90 years means that one has to learn to pay special attention to one’s bodily functions.
- Children have to be prepared sensitively for the growing task of themselves having to provide care to children and older people.

And these results of research on caregiving between three to four generations within families hint to the new quality of family being a social network of care relations that is not bound to one household.

Third, the pluralization of the family and the growing risk of divorce and remarriage do not destroy the wish to live in a conventional model of the family, as many surveys have shown. However, many families have to cope with new tasks. These concern building up new relationships, for instance, in a new stepfamily after a divorce, and they also concern practical aspects of doing family—more and more children who “commute” between parents after a divorce. Research (Schneewind and Walper 2008) has de-dramatized the pessimistic worst case scenarios, but it also shows the stress of these new relationships and practical arrangements. Children from such families require special attention in the context of all-day schools. Teachers must be informed about the newest research on these issues, which could be a basis for a professional “case management” in the all-day schools. Otherwise,

old stigmatizing stereotypes about “the children of single parents” and “the children of divorce” could impact negatively on children in schools.

In summary, knowledge about the new families of today should be a basic building block of teaching for teachers in all-day schools.

## **Conclusions: From Negative Family Rhetoric to New Vistas on the Potential of All-Day Schools**

The new tasks and guidelines for shaping all-day schools should not be deduced from negative family rhetoric (Lange and Alt 2009) that exaggerates family failure without considering the structural conditions of doing family in late modernity. The more promising pathway seems to be to analyse the multidimensional social changes and their impact on families and schools. This chapter has shown that the most dominant force in the complex process of social change is the new economy in close connection with the new welfare state. Both generate new profiles of risks and chances based on social class, gender, and ethnicity. On the one hand, there is more flexibility and less rigidity in the sphere of work; on the other hand, there are many new stress factors arising from the “brave new world of work” that families have to handle.

Seen in this light, educational settings and especially all-day schools should not be conceptualized as a special instance of individual and societal repair—for heuristic purposes it seems more fruitful to model them as institutions for fostering experimental innovations concerning the nexus of education and everyday life of young people who face the challenges of late modernity. Schneider (2010) has written lucidly that we should not confuse the aims of social policies with the means of social policy. Applied to all-day schools as experimental innovations, this means that we have to define the aims of educational settings in a discourse that should ideally combine sociological analyses of social trends with the perspectives of children, their parents, and the professional staff of all-day schools (cf. the results in Soremski et al. 2011).

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# The Redistribution of Responsibility Between State and Parents: Family in the Context of Post-Welfare-State Transformation\*

Nina Oelkers

## Steering Instead of Rowing: From Intervention State to Steering State<sup>1</sup>

The diagnosis of a fundamental malfunction of the welfare-state arrangements in the light of global modernization requirements is often taken to be an unshakable truth in the current sociopolitical discourse (see Maaser 2006). It constitutes the background for a new model of the regulation of state welfare production. The welfare state, formerly active provider of benefits, relocates to a new arrangement of the social, leading to a reassessment of strategies for the activation of a “responsibilization” toward legally granted benefits (on the concept of welfare production, see Oelkers 2011). The social intervention state intervening in the life conduct of the individual, simultaneously being both normative and caring in many aspects, is supposed to be replaced by a postwelfare steering state stressing individual initiative and responsibility, turning individuals into the base of an altered practice of steering the social: a “government from a distance, willing to be the coxswain, but letting others do the rowing” (Lindenberg 2002, p. 78, translated).

Speaking of a postwelfare steering state does not imply a market-radical withdrawal of state institutions from the management of the “social sector.” The actual situation reveals different forms of regulation of the social and a questioning of

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\*A similar German-language version of this chapter has been published in Kessl and Otto (2009).

<sup>1</sup>Garland (1997) makes a similar comparison using the concepts “administrative state” and/or “governmental state.”

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previously valid logics of thinking, acting, and problematizing the welfare-state arrangement. Thus, speaking of a post-welfare-state constellation does not contradict the fact that concepts of welfare, commonwealth, well-being, and a “good society” still exist, continue to be defined politically, and are followed or “produced” more or less systematically (see Ziegler 2008).

Next to a close interconnection of labor market and social politics, the essential contents of a post-welfare-state transformation consist of (a) the rise of a “politics of identity” aiming at a change in culture and attitude and looking at issues of “appreciation,” along with the decline of a “politics of class” focusing on “redistribution” (see Fraser 2000; Heite et al. 2007); (b) a redefinition of problems of social inequality into problems of “social exclusion”; (c) a form of addressee orientation less oriented toward objective social capabilities of existence or action, but more toward subjective “happiness” and personal well-being (see Landhäußer and Ziegler 2005); and (d) the reevaluation of informal forms of social politics centering on subsidiary self-care and the solidarity potentials of the immediate (local or familial) environment (see Kessl and Otto 2007; Oelkers 2007).

These aspects of a reformation of the social link up with a dynamics topicalized in political sciences discourse as the transition from an intervention state logic toward a steering or governmental state logic. It becomes clear that the emerging postwelfare redesign of the social does not follow merely fiscal aspects but, first and foremost, normative-political and social-ethical principles and beliefs.

A pronouncedly political determination to arrange social conditions, the belief in the governability of sociopolitical development processes, and a collectivization of responsibility and risk security in a bureaucratic-administrative organization of social solidarity are features of an intervention state striving for “welfare optimization” through rational planning. Being the responsible center of action, this intervention state governs social development processes through hierarchical intervention and policy programs. Not least against the backdrop of the thesis that collective social-state regulations increasingly contradict the needs and interests of their own addressees in wanting to act responsibly, it is doubtful that such a social intervention state can react appropriately to shifting life plans and lifestyles.

The emerging steering state is assigned exactly this capability. It keeps operating actively and strategically while lowering service intensity, “but only in the proper sense of piloting that is, as a pilot who must know the weather situation, the shoals, the dangers, and how to localize the destination, but leaves it to the crew to sail and to maintain the ship” (Braun 2001, p. 104, translated). In a certain sense, the steering state can be read as a reaction to conservative–liberal criticism of the expansion of the welfare state. Especially since 1970, this criticism has diagnosed a social blocking leading to “ungovernability.” This ungovernability is considered to be the result of the overload of the state caused by an inflation of irreversible sociopolitical claims by its citizens. The classic social-state arrangements would be unable to find any answers to this overload that did not lead to a loss of legitimation or a sociopolitical inability to act (see Offe 1979). The idea of the steering state, however, is linked to expectations of regaining governability in the sense of a new *welfare governance*, and increasing the governance potential of the state by stating political

orientations and target definitions, for example, in the form of policy programs, while delegating their execution to individual and collective subjects. Accordingly, the steering state combines political governance and social self-regulation in a new way.

This new steering logic implies a form of government that reassesses *indirect* mechanisms guiding actors toward taking a personal responsibility for their lifestyles that is compatible with common welfare programs. Appropriate policy programs of responsibility activation can also be considered as techniques for the construction of subjectivity. This reveals an essential part of the new, post-welfare-state style of governance: It replaces “‘outdated,’ rigid regulation mechanisms through the development of self-regulation mechanisms” (Lemke 1997, p. 256, translated). The processes of responsibility transmission are supposed to thus mobilize styles of self-guidance and self-care.

A new catalog of rights and duties ends the decapacitation of welfare-state clients insinuated by the “welfare expertocracy.” A pathological definition of addressees of, for example, social work (see Peters 1973) is replaced by the image of the “personally responsible customer.” Such persons should be provided with the necessary information and advice that will encourage them to “deal with their situation—now deciphered as their own, individual risk—in a responsible, that is, in a risk-minimizing and cost-reducing way” (Otto and Ziegler 2004, p. 126, translated). The task of the state, or of state institutions, is to provide a framework encouraging and stimulating “autonomous” citizen activity.

Whereas this delegates (former) state tasks, it does not weaken state power at all, but even increases it, because the delegation of tasks and responsibilities bundles and rationalizes forces. However, certain state powers and the supervision over the distribution of certain resources remain in the hands of the state in order to increase the efficiency of the new “governing from a distance.” *Activation*, understood as a political form of addressing encouragement, is part of this “indirect government” (see Fach 2000, pp. 120–121). It alludes to the state’s negation of a direct governing position within an indirect government, taking the position of “enabler” or “activator.” This constitutes a policy guiding individual and collective subjects to govern themselves, to take life into their own hands, and to take responsibility. Whereas “action” is increasingly left to the citizens, state governing now concentrates on guidance, (pre)decision making, and standard setting. The previously direct power relation is replaced by indirect mobilization of individuals’ informal styles of governance rather than formal ones (see Bröckling et al. 2000, p. 26). The citizens’ autonomy and political maturity are proclaimed and supported by state policy, simultaneously implying a continuous return of risks into private responsibility (see Schmidt-Semisch 2000, p. 173). This assignation of responsibility relates to the idea of autonomously acting rational individuals being capable of solving their own problems. This “care of the self” (Foucault 1993, p. 41, translated) connected with a higher requirement for individual achievement is a representation of a governing strategy of collectively securing efforts rather than an emphatic liberation program (see Kessl 2005, p. 51). This strategy links appeals to the “self-optimization” of life conduct with the claim to an ethic rationality compatible with common

welfare: Post-welfare-state strategies of political steering thus aim to a strong degree toward a production of *morally responsible subjects*. The lifestyle of these subjects serves as a visible feature of a successful or failed self-control without the possibility of consulting external explanation patterns for success or failure: Individuals are obliged to “govern” themselves appropriately and practice an adequate life conduct. The welfare arrangement of such a postsocial steering state from a welfare-culture point of view aims to establish a mentality of “the blame is on you,” creating the background of legitimation for making the density and depth of public welfare production dependent on personal willingness to produce welfare.

The reconception of the social state turns the (re)distribution of responsibilities between state and society into a key element (see Kessler and Otto 2009). A “program” for the activation of responsibility focuses on the production of welfare beyond the state and aims at the market as a welfare sector (third sector), as well as at familial and other networks of the close social environment as an informal service provision sector. This variant, often acclaimed as “welfare society,” aims to activate responsibility in (civil) society for the production of welfare. The state steps back from its function of welfare actor and delegates this function to actants in society, at the same time, reducing depth of services. It does not just disappear, however, becoming a minimalist neoliberal night watchman state; on the contrary, it takes over responsibilities of frameworks and warranties, thus providing the fulfillment of public tasks while not executing them. The program’s formula, “from providing to enabling,” following the suggestion to “reinvent government” becomes a metaphorical motto: steering, not rowing. The concept “neoliberal” does not sufficiently outline this circumstance. Semantically, the concept of “neosocial” seems much more appropriate because it takes into account the increased steering by the state (Maaser 2006, p. 69, translated; see Kessler and Otto 2002).

This neosocial reorientation of welfare production in an activator state presupposes self-providing subjects acting as *entrepreneurs in their own right*. Against the backdrop of these remarks, the following section focuses on the question of the redistribution of responsibility between state and family.

## Post-Welfare-State Redistribution of Responsibility

The essential function of the welfare-state arrangement of the social is its legitimizing and pacifying effect. As Kaufmann (1997) argues, the welfare-state arrangement activates these effects by guaranteeing the social conditions of welfare production and simultaneously stabilizing certain private life and family models that will (re)produce the human capital required by different fields of society.<sup>2</sup> Producing a “normal” course of these life models is a key subject of state legislation. In fact, the

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<sup>2</sup>Viewed from an economic perspective, this particularly involves the “formation of human capital.” The willingness to work should be encouraged, leading to an increase in labor productivity.



whole welfare-state arrangement is based on certain, both normative and empirical, assumptions of normality. This is especially true for “permanent male employment and merely sporadic female employment; the self-evidence of marriage and family foundation for both sexes, as well as an interfamilial work distribution in a sense of the model of the housewife marriage” (Kaufmann 1997, p. 60, translated). In the context of the fulfillment of elementary reproduction functions under conditions of dependent wage labor as the norm existence, the Fordist *Golden Age* of welfare capitalism is especially strongly oriented toward a traditional core family.

In the context of a post-welfare-state transformation of social politics, the welfare-state form of addressing families and parental responsibility seems to intensify while simultaneously shifting in an ambivalent way. The family, quasi constituting the place of natural solidarity and reproduction exertions, is proclaimed increasingly as a balance for deregulated, desolidarized working life. This discursive localization of family raises the problem that higher public expectations placed on families in the context of the deregulation of working life (demand for flexible, highly mobile, adaptive, skill-enhancing employees) and a sociopolitical activation of persons entitled to receive benefits are confronted with an empirical situation in which pressure on familial arrangements is increasing and familial poverty is intensifying. This is because “a continuous and binding shouldering of responsibility for others (e.g., children) is significantly more difficult under conditions of precarious and deregulated work” (Richter 2004, p. 14, translated). The trend toward heterogeneous familial life arrangements and the diversification of accompanying problems is facing a decrease in welfare-state support arrangements that is making particularly family life more precarious. As a result, about one-third of all children entitled to receive child benefits are living in families with an annual household income of less than 16,000 € (see Deutscher Bundestag 2006).

Looking at the family, the welfare state seems to be increasingly less of a “guarantor of social justice, solidarity, and social balance” (BMFSFJ 2002, p. 59, translated) and thus a precondition for economic and social stability. The premises of a responsibility-activating steering state are also reflected by the political addressing of familial living contexts: With the current decrease of the “social,” the family (re)gains intensified social-state and social-political attention as a resource. At the same time, sociopolitical advancement and support of the norm family as the necessary prerequisite for the usability context of a Fordist model of industrial capitalism are becoming increasingly decrepit.

The task of social politics ceases to be to focus primarily on the execution of a certain form of reproduction assurance as opposed to providing a framework within which diverse forms of reproduction can emerge that are highly compatible with the form of society or, at least, do not contradict it (see Schaarschuch 1990). Entering into, maintaining, and dissolving marriage and partner relations thus become the subject of free individual decision. Instead of marriage, parenthood becomes the central nexus of public regulation and advancement interests. Also in the context of sociopolitical targeting “the always latent difference between married couple and parental couple within the family now [becomes] manifest. This intensifies the complexity of requirements for parenthood” (Buchinger 2001, p. 39, translated).

We can assume that the constitutionally guaranteed responsibility of parents for their children is reversing from privilege to strain, while, at the same time, familial network and private resources are ceasing to be sufficient to cope with structurally caused problems, and the post-welfare-state redistribution of responsibility means reduction of benefits.

## Sociopolitical Activation of Parental Responsibility

Parental (education) responsibility for the child (as object of responsibility) consists in the obligation to provide attention, care, education, and support. However, not only the child but also the state in its function as guardian can be considered as an addressee of parental responsibility that parents have to answer to in legally codified cases (e.g., threats to child well-being). In their role as stateside guardians, welfare-state institutions can and must demand parental obligation and responsibility for the child. The legal concept of responsibility—focused on in this constellation as *blame responsibility* (see Goodin 1998)—takes the violation of a defined legal norm or the violation of certain legal goods as a reference. Correspondingly, legal responsibility results from “the failure to fulfill an obligation demand, independent from having agreed with the underlying norm or not. Responsibility is ascribed and demanded, regardless of whether the individual is recognizing this responsibility or not” (Kaufmann 1992, p. 42, translated). Here, “usage of the concept of responsibility is primarily a means to hold individuals acting in increasingly vague contexts accountable for their hazardous deeds or to make them act caringly and preventively” (Heidbrink 2003, p. 18, translated; see Goodin 1998). It is not that a person “is” responsible but is rather “held responsible” so that the ascription process could be called “responsibilization” [*Verantwortlichung*] (Heidbrink 2003, p. 22).

By delegating responsibility (for children), the delegating party—in this case, the state—is freed from the decision it has an interest in. From a functional perspective, responsibility—as *task responsibility* (see Goodin 1998)—is required in contexts in which ordinary “means of definition and control of obligations” fail. “Responsibility appeals to self-obligation of the responsibility bearer in the sense of a nonprogrammable readiness to act” (Kaufmann 1992, p. 75, translated). Ascription of responsibility and acceptance of responsibility represent a mode of social steering in vastly complex action contexts.

Role- or task-related *accountability* and its subjective correlate are employed where “correct” or “meaningful” behavior can no longer be defined *a priori* in a general or at least plausible form. Or, in the language of ethics: where it is not clear what obligations demand. (Kaufmann 2006, p. 54, translated)

The advantages for those who take responsibility consist in constitutionally granted state support, care, and protective benefits—at least in a welfare-state-oriented arrangement of the social. The welfare-state linking of familial acceptance of responsibility with state control, caring intervention, and support is, however, progressively dissolving in a post-welfare-state arrangement. The ascription of individual responsibility as a key concept of an activating social policy gains central

value, but at the same time, state benefits, especially transfer payments, are dismantled or restructured. This dismantling is justified as liberation from care intervention and welfare-“expertocratic” incapacitation.

The transfer of responsibility in the context of a post-welfare-state deinstitutionalization of social problem fields promises a gain in autonomy for those who accept responsibility. This is because “one-sided dependencies from institutional—in our culture, mostly hierarchical—presets are gradually dissolving. They are being replaced by a freedom to create the respective systems and relations autonomously” (Buchinger 2001, p. 43, translated). However, in the framework of neosocial governmentality (see Kessl 2005; Ziegler 2001), autonomy, responsibility, and freedom of choice do not mark the limits of government action, but “instead, they themselves become tools and vehicles for changing subjects’ relations toward themselves and others” (Bröckling et al. 2000, p. 30, translated). An increase in (ascribed) freedom and autonomy is accompanied by higher demands on individual performance and responsibility. The task of supporting autonomy and responsibility remains in the hand of state institutions. The state gives normative directives; task fulfillment and problem solving are delegated down to family living conditions along with a reduction or restructuring of support services. Alternative lifestyles may be legitimized on a normative level socially (e.g., single-parent families or nonmarital relationships); however, responsibility for the consequences, costs, and issues ensuing from these familial living conditions is left to family members. The ascription of responsibility refers to the idea of an individual acting rationally and, above all, being capable of acting. Accordingly, the ascription and demand of responsibility is confronted by the question of personal ability and structural possibility—in this example—of parents who simply cannot always solve the problems and conflicts (increasingly) ascribed to them. As a consequence, ascription of responsibility remains a mere appeal to parental willingness to act. “Making someone accountable for something without letting them participate in corresponding capacitation processes, produces that odd kind of responsibility activation—a mixture of empowerment and disciplining—that makes nonsense of autonomy as a basis for taking responsibility” (Maaser 2006, p. 79, translated). Social conditions have changed in a way that increasingly granted autonomy and ascribed responsibility are not accompanied by the provision of those resources that are considered to be prerequisites of responsibility:

The development of a responsibility culture requires institutional preconditions as well as a sufficient distribution of cultural and economic capital. This is crucial in order to initiate an infrastructure with correspondingly favorable responsibility-generating *dispositives*, practices of work-sharing responsibility, as well as the assignation of scopes, identifiable actors, and rationally justified criteria. (Maaser 2006, p. 78, translated)

## Conclusion

For the federal German welfare arrangement, we can currently outline a transformation of the interaction between family and state regarding welfare production that could be called refamilialization (see Oelkers and Richter 2009, 2010): An increased

(re)integration of family (members) into person-based welfare production is developing, for example, in the case of benefits for children, adolescents, senior citizens, and persons in need of care. A key element of this welfare-state reformation is the activation of responsibility, in this case, parental responsibility. It can be summarized that social demands toward the family, especially parents, have increased significantly. At the same time, the framing conditions for familial welfare production have become worse because stabilizing factors such as “normal employment” in combination with “normal,” middle-class families are crumbling (see Oelkers 2011). Diversified forms of family lifestyles are not secured in a comparable way. The restructuring of welfare-state support systems implies the increased demand for informal forms of care. The compensation of social risks (such as unemployment, illness, etc.) is being (re)formulated as private or family effort, while social structures based on legal claims are being reduced. Both the “privatization” of social issues as well as the dismantling of social security are taking place simultaneously with a society-induced destabilization and detraditionalizing of informal and familial networks. The efforts of families to engage in welfare production neither can be regulated by traditional norms nor are they capable of being secured by the informal benefit provision sector (see Hamburger 2008, p. 42).

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**Part II**  
**Child Rearing Between Family Care**  
**and Institutional Provisions**

# Early Childhood Education and Social Inequality: Parental Models of a “Good” Childhood

Tanja Betz

The growing importance of an “early childhood education” is clear to see, no matter whether you open the daily newspapers; read scientific publications, practical guides, and handbooks; or follow political debates on issues of childhood. Wittmann et al. (2011) even speak of an “early childhood educational offensive.” This is coupled with a focus on “the educational potential of the first decade of life,” and it “demands an appreciable ‘schoolification’ of childhood in the form of decreasing enrollment ages and a school-like orientation to day care facilities” (Wittmann et al. 2011, p. 14, translated). In this quotation, “early childhood education” is equated with a “publicly subsidized provision for children under compulsory school age.” It demonstrates the fact that childhood has become more of a “public affair” than in the past (Honig 2011, p. 182), and it is considered both pro-development and socially necessary for children to participate in early childhood education and care (ECEC) (see EACEA 2009; OECD 2011). Often, reform is urged; addressed are the necessary political developments for publicly provided childcare for preschool children and other changes to elementary schooling. Over the past few years, there have been great changes in this area. In German preschool education, for example, the educational mandate, regulated by law since the 1970s for the kindergarten age group (3- to 6-year-olds), has been amended by the *Day Care Reconstruction Act* (TAG) to include children under the age of 3, an area dominated so far by caregivers (BMFSFJ 2010a, p. 144). Elementary school education is seeing the introduction of full-day schools—a novelty in Germany. The latter measure was initiated particularly in order to narrow the educational gap for children from low-income,

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immigrant, or ethnic minority families and also to pursue educational, employment, and family–political motives (BMFSFJ 2010a). These goals also play an increasingly important role in the preschool years from a political point of view (Betz 2010a; EACEA 2009; OECD 2011). These developments have decisively changed the childhood phase of life.

The institutions of the elementary and preschool field have received greater attention from not only the political but also the academic establishment. This is partly due to the expectation that the reduction of unequal starting opportunities has the greatest chance of success (EACEA 2009; Lesemann 2009; OECD 2011) and that this area is considered to be politically shaped. Along with these changes and the emphasis on the social need for early childhood education, the politically ordained—and perhaps also the parent-related—criteria for a “good” childhood have been demonstrably transformed. “Good” is considered to be all that is deemed by the majority to be socially appropriate and right for the growth of children and future generations. This becomes apparent, for example, in the legal framework or the structural changes (BMFSFJ 2010a; Olk and Hübenthal 2011, p. 54). In the course of expanding ECEC and—as in the case of Germany—also expanding the half-day to a full-day school, the “curriculum of childhood” and the experiences of children have been altered (Honig 2011, p. 182). In the background of these developments, the parents are left to seek and thus constitute the “private sphere” of childhood. This includes the parents’ understanding of a “good” childhood—especially given the entanglement with early childhood education—and the parents’ interest in shaping the child’s life “before and alongside” ECEC and elementary schools. The parents are, however, in spite of the increasing importance ascribed to ECEC, key actors in their children’s lives. They determine the actual shape of their children’s lives as legal guardians and caregivers and thus frame unequal childhoods (Betz 2008). Several questions remain largely unexplored in the actual debate: What ideas do parents have of a “good” childhood, and how should childhood be designed? What form should parental practices of education and care therefore take? What weight does (or should) early childhood education<sup>1</sup> have in a child’s life according to the parents? To what extent do their ideas correspond with the dominant political conceptions of a “good” childhood and early childhood education? These initial questions structure this article. They are supplemented by the question whether and what differences and similarities exist between parents regarding their respective social statuses and thus to what extent evidence for inequalities in early childhood can be found.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “education” and “care” are mostly combined in English-speaking countries to underline that services for young children (and, we add, parental practices) can combine care, developmental opportunities, and learning opportunities (EACEA 2009).

## Problem Statement Childhood and Inequality—Theoretical Views of Early Childhood Education

Tervooren (2010), in referring to Norbert Ricken, explains the overall presence of early childhood education in that someone who publicly uses the expression *education* “can gain all kinds of strategic advantages without necessarily having to demonstrate and reasonably redeem the claimed and often only assumed observations, if not theoretically than at least in form of a concept” (Tervooren 2010, pp. 180–181, translated).<sup>2</sup> One could add that this also applies to the long-term effects posited with the label “early childhood education.” This label comes along with the hopes to significantly narrow the education gap for children from low-income and immigrant or ethnic minority families through participation in ECEC. It would be worthwhile indeed to look closer at how the renewed assertion of the issue “early childhood education” has come about<sup>3</sup> and how simultaneously the purport of childhood and the role of parenthood change.

Within childhood studies, there are research topics that investigate changing societal interests and political strategies—in the context of the extension of socioinvestive politics—and that analyze how children and childhood are moved into the spotlight and which role (early) education plays in this (Klinkhammer 2010; Lange 2010; Olk and Hübenthal 2011). It is interesting to observe—as outlined above—that the public and especially the political debates about childhood and (early) education are restricted almost exclusively to ECEC and in parts to elementary school education. The following topics can be reconstructed as dominant from political documents<sup>4</sup>: the qualification deficits of (early childhood education) personnel, the intensifying cooperation between day care centers and elementary schools, individual support and early linguistic educational support, the quality debate around ECEC institutions, as well as the contribution of ECEC to furthering equal opportunities. In the course of this increased focusing on public institutions and services, parents at the maximum become thematically the addressees of pedagogical institutions—but by no means (willful) protagonists (Bischoff and Betz 2011). These observations are—especially when it comes to the high expectations set on combating the educational disadvantages of low-income and minority children via ECEC—quite irritating for at least two reasons.

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<sup>2</sup>Talk of early childhood education proves to be functional for many social groups, particularly, as Tervooren (2010) proposes, because of the vagueness of the term “education,” which can be regarded as the driver of implementation in this field.

<sup>3</sup>The focus on preprimary education and care settings as institutions with a compensatory assignment and the arguments in assigning this function to ECEC hint at parallels to the debate of the 1960s–1970s.

<sup>4</sup>The topics were determined by the “educare” research project currently being conducted at the Goethe University (Frankfurt, Germany) under the direction of the author of this article and funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. Findings are based on a discourse analysis of official federal reports and resolutions from various areas of German politics between 2004 and 2010 (see the English web site: <http://www.idea-frankfurt.eu/homepage/idea-projects/projekt-educare>).

First, by focusing on publicly subsidized provisions for children, the various elements that shape contemporary childhood are blanked out. If childhood is understood as a “configuration of social processes, discourses and structures which relate to ways of living as a child at a particular time in a particular society” (Zeiger 2009, p. 127), then the current configuration and shape of childhood is determined by criteria not covered by ECEC institutions (Mierendorff 2010).<sup>5</sup> The typical criteria of childhood are described as scholarization and familialization. Scholarization in this context means the process of establishing a protected and sheltered learning space for children that, from the view of childhood studies, not only includes ECEC institutions such as kindergarten and elementary school but also extends beyond these. Familialization of childhood refers to the fact that children are also to be understood as part of the private sphere of a family, and thus, parenting responsibilities are effectively a significant criterion of childhood as well as the private (inner) space. Therefore, from the perspective of childhood studies, “day care institutions and facilities are only one of many facets of parental strategies for ensuring the education of their children and are only one of a number of living and learning environments” (Honig 2011, p. 192, translated). Seen from this angle, it would make sense when speaking of “early childhood education” to analyze the correlation between institutionalized and familial (as well as market-determined<sup>6</sup>) elements of a child’s life and to question what significance early childhood education has in the parents’ perception and how they currently perceive their role as parents (see the next section below). Research projects within childhood studies cannot just focus exclusively on the changing conditions and ways of “growing up in public responsibility” (BMFSFJ 2002). Rather, the private sphere of childhood must be considered and included in any kind of observation in order to gain insight into parental perceptions and practices of education and care, and thus to understand their mix of formal and informal care.

Second, restricting the focus to educational establishments is questionable from the point of view of not only childhood studies but also inequality theory. Especially when looking at the close links between social class and early educational participation or successful performance at school, the family is ascribed an important role in numerous studies: For instance, whereas scientists can demonstrate that attending a “good” kindergarten can give children a developmental advantage of up to 1 year, the studies also reveal that the family has far greater importance for the child’s development than ECEC institutions (Tietze 1998). The latest OECD report “Doing better for families” (OECD 2011, p. 5) points out that “economic circumstances are more important predictors of child’s outcomes (especially cognitive) than maternal employment *or participation in childcare*” [emphasis added]. Therefore, apart from

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the decommodification, in short, the prohibition of gainful employment of children and the institutionalized-age hierarchy manifest as the distance between children and adults and correlate with the addressing of children primarily as humans in development (Betz 2010b) and as underaged (Mierendorff 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Honig (2011) points out that market-determined elements are also part of a child’s life, for example, in the form of the education and care market parents and children encounter.

assessing the commonalities and generalizable parental models of a “good” childhood, it is insightful to take into consideration distinctive differences and inequalities linked to familial circumstances as well (Tomanovic 2004). Conceptually, one must, on the one hand, look at the sociostructural markers such as social class and accordingly the parents’ cultural, social, and economic capital (Bourdieu 2002) that structure the above-mentioned processes and highlight “unequal childhoods” within modern childhood patterns (as particularized in Betz 2008, 2009). On the other hand, one must assume analog sociocultural differentiations that point to differing self-perceptions of parents, different habits, and different practices of education and care. Therefore, when it comes to analyzing childhood and early childhood education from an inequality-theoretical perspective, conceptual assumptions become central. These assumptions postulate that “depending on the living environment of the parents with its milieu... specific characteristics... [there exist] differing perceptions of education and the necessity of education” (Henry-Huthmacher 2008, p. 7, translated) and that parents also have different ideas about who should care for and—if applicable—support and advance their children.

## Good, Early Child’s Life from the Parents’ View

In their role as legal guardians and custody holders, parents are key players in a child’s life (Tomanovic 2004<sup>7</sup>). It is therefore relevant to analyze their ideas on what determines a “good childhood” and, consequently, how the day-to-day life of their children should be shaped or how parents set the framework. If, when, and how long a child should attend a childcare center; who apart from the nuclear family, the social network, and the ECEC institutions is included to what degree in the care of the child; which other organized (leisure-time) activities are provided for the children; and what value is placed on early childhood education—all these elements can be understood as parental practices and as elements of a habitus based on ideas of a proper and good childhood. The various kinds of education, care, and upbringing of children and the parents’ choice of educational and care arrangements that include (in addition to ECEC institutions) private and semiprivate care manifest the parents’ idea of their child and a “good” childhood. Therefore, the parents’ ideas can also be seen in those aspects of childhood that are not part of the so-called self-care (Honig 2011, p. 190) of children.

It is parents who, by shaping a child’s life outside the politically intended, increasingly standardized, and assessed educational institutions, determine whether children start their educational career with an “advantage” or “disadvantage”—among others, in the way that children’s experiences and abilities meet with the

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<sup>7</sup> Tomanovic (2004) analyzes the family resources such as cultural stimuli, the use of space, the organization of time, activities in the everyday life of children, and also social contacts and relationships of children that are strongly structured by either their parents or the family habitus.

approval in varying degrees of the educational institutions (Betz 2010c). In a school context, this issue is discussed under the notion of “congruence.” To what extent one can already speak of “congruence” in regard to early childhood education and care institutions is a question that should be further explored as a possible aspect relevant to inequality in early childhood. These aspects are significant insofar as differences between children from different social classes are to be assumed. Especially when it comes to the question of the reproduction of inequalities and the analysis of the educational disadvantages of low-income and minority children, the parents’ perspectives must be considered. Therefore, in the following, I shall present an overview of relevant studies. These studies explore the parents’ role by providing insight into the class-specific practices and ideas of a “good” childhood that decisively structure the (unequal) lives of children and that correspond with the parental capitals. The studies feature class-specific assumptions concerning (early) child education and care in particular and their relation to child needs (perceived as age dependent) that structure the parental practices of education and care.

## **Parental Practices of Childhood Education and Care for Children Under Compulsory School Age**

The childcare enrollment rate serves as an indicator for the public perception of the parental role today. Regarding preschoolers, parents in Germany can choose the services of ECEC at an earlier or later age—or not at all. Contrary to mandatory school attendance, no compulsory attendance is established for preschool age day care in the Child and Youth Services Act (KJHG); participation in publicly subsidized care for children under compulsory school age is voluntary. Furthermore, an entitlement to a kindergarten place for every child from age 3 on is stipulated; the provision is to be extended to cover children from the age of 1 starting in 2013. However, if, when, and to what extent parents decide to have their child cared for outside the home (there is a rather great variety ranging from a few hours a day up to full-day care, Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010), and in which establishment, depending on the regional provisions, remains at the discretion of the parents.

The childcare participation or enrollment rates—which in Germany are called “educational participation rates” (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010)—that can be derived from official data show that the vast majority of parents claim a day care place for their child/children. In 2009, the participation rate of 3- to 6-year-olds in the western and eastern parts of Germany stood at over 90% (Kreyenfeld and Krapf 2010). However, participation rates for children under the age of 3<sup>8</sup> reveal a different picture: Sending a child of this age group to nursery

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<sup>8</sup> Available for this age group are not only the services of ECEC institutions but also of child day care services that cover a much smaller share of day care services (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010).

school is not a natural decision for parents; on average, the childcare coverage in Germany is very low (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010). Not only is the general participation rate much lower but also one encounters distinct regional differences: In eastern Germany, three times as many parents choose to send their children of this age group to day care institutions as compared to western Germany (45% vs. less than 15%) (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010, p. 49).

With regard to kindergarten attendance among 3- to 6-year-olds, a closer look reveals great differences. The attendance of day care institutions varies—on a generally high level—according to the families' socioeconomic background: Low-income families tend to send their children to day care centers somewhat less and only when the children are older. For this reason, these children spend less time in childcare institutions (Betz 2010a, p. 116) than children with middle-class parents (see, also, some OECD countries: OECD 2011). Families with a higher household income also use child day care facilities less as part of their mix of formal and informal care (Fuchs and Peucker 2006). However, differences are much bigger when it comes to the younger age groups: A parents' survey conducted by the German AID:A-Study demonstrates that children from families with a higher household income are about twice as likely (35%) to attend childcare facilities than children from low-income families (18%) (BMFSFJ 2010b, p. 12). Furthermore, it has been proven that parents with children under the age of 24 months and with lower household income participate significantly less frequently in extrafamilially organized activities such as baby swimming than parents with higher incomes (BMFSFJ 2010b). The same holds true for older children up to school age: Low-income parents with children in this age group take much less advantage of educational or care provisions such as sports clubs and music schools than parents with higher income (see AID:A-Study in BMFSFJ 2010b, p. 15).

Studies from other European countries also show different though typical care strategies in different social classes (see, on parental practices of childhood education and care in London, Vincent in this book; on structured familial activities of preschoolers in Serbia, Tomanovic 2004). A study conducted in Norway provides a differentiated insight into parents' childhood education and care practices for children under the age of 3 (on the following: Stefansen and Farstad 2010<sup>9</sup>). *Middle-class parents* (from urban and rural areas) take turns in caring for their child during the child's first year: During the first 6 months, it is mainly the mother who takes care of the child while the father takes over for the second half of the paid parental leave of 12 months. Following the 1 year of interfamilial care, these parents typically choose a childcare facility. This practice of the so-called early caregiver turn taking of children under the age of 1 (Stefansen and Farstad 2010, p. 125) and the choice of extrafamilial care comparably early in the child's life hardly exists at all among *working-class parents*. They usually organize childcare for the first few

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<sup>9</sup>The study is based on qualitative, semistructured interviews with 58 families starting when each family had a child aged 6–12 months. A subsample of the families was interviewed a second and third time (see, for more details, Stefansen and Farstad 2010, p. 124).

years of the child's life within the familial environment, with several individuals assuming the role of caregiver at the same time: This includes not only parents but also grandparents (see, on informal care and the role of grandparents, OECD 2011, pp. 144–145), friends, and others. Furthermore, they tend to send their children to an extrafamilial childcare institution from the age of 2 at the earliest—provided that their financial situation does not force them to seek a job before then, which consequently obliges them to make use of the day care system at an earlier stage (see below).

The care strategies of parents presented here demonstrate that the range of early childhood care arrangements depends greatly on the child's age and refers to a far broader set of care places and constellations than becomes obvious through merely focusing on ECEC. The parents' strategy is furthermore linked systematically to the parents' social position. Consequently, this setup leads to class-specific (unequal) designs of children's lives. There is also a distinct gender-specific aspect in parental education and care practices: Mothers play a different—often major—role in childcare than fathers. In Germany, two-thirds of parents questioned in a survey furnished the information that childrearing duties were assumed exclusively by the mother (Henry-Huthmacher 2008). The same, clearly gender-specific pattern becomes obvious in other OECD countries: “There are... clear divisions in the type of care provided by men and women: mothers typically provide physical personal childcare and housework, while fathers spend more time on educational and recreational childcare activities” (OECD 2011, p. 14).

## Parental Ideas of Early Childhood Education and Care

The practices allow us to draw conclusions about parents' underlying ideas about a “good” childhood: It seems fair to say that a child's age is a vital criterion for parents when it comes to their evaluation of whether the child's day-to-day life should be complemented by extrafamilial institutions or individuals. In Germany, care outside the home of children under the age of 3 in ECEC is obviously viewed with greater skepticism<sup>10</sup>—though with rather strong regional differences—than kindergarten attendance from 3 years on (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010). These convictions are strongly shaped by the perception of a “good” mother, as empirical studies have shown. This idea, which remains typical for the western German states, is based on the assumption that a child's development progresses most successfully when the mother takes care of her child. Consequently, the preferred care option is a mother–child constellation (Henry-Huthmacher 2008).

Care practices preferred by parents are also rooted in (class-specific) ideas on children's demands. This can be demonstrated by looking at the above-mentioned Norwegian study: This study attests to the fact that *working-class parents* prefer the option of caring for their children in their domestic environment because they are

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<sup>10</sup> Even though participation rates among children in this age group (in western and eastern Germany) are rising (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2010, p. 49).

convinced that this is what the child needs. As a vulnerable being, dependent on the family and with great emotional needs, the child requires safe surroundings: the family in which it is supposed to first learn basic skills such as walking and talking. The guiding ideas are primarily protection, affection, care, and, to a much smaller extent, (explicit) learning opportunities. Only over the course of the years—as the child’s development progresses in what is regarded primarily as a “natural” way among these social classes—the child increasingly gains autonomy and independence. From the parents’ point of view, these are the prerequisites for extrafamilial care (Stefansen and Farstad 2010). The observable care arrangement, the so-called sheltered space for care, is thus the expression of a class-specific “cultural model of care,” a conglomeration of parental ideas about the demands of young children (Stefansen and Farstad 2010, p. 120) and about what parents consider natural, normal, and necessary. Parents choose a domestic, intimate care arrangement in keeping with these ideas—provided that they have the necessary resources such as economic and social capital at their disposal that allow them to realize their preferred care practices. This is important to note because—as Stefansen and Farstad (2010) have shown—this is not always the case, particularly in disadvantaged families. Potentially eliding their preference, these parents have to strike a compromise between their ideals of “good parenting,” their ideas about the demands of young children, and the requirements of their jobs by, for instance, making use of publicly subsidized provision for children earlier than desired.

The parental view regarding the demands of young children in *middle-class families*, however, leads to the care practice commonly called “tidy trajectory of care” (Stefansen and Farstad 2010, p. 121). Choosing care arrangements outside the home for children from age 1 on is not the result of a compromise—trying to strike a balance between family and work—but a corollary of the parents’ conviction that external care meets the demands of the child. This is due to the fact that, from age 1 on, the child is perceived as autonomous, active, and relatively independent, which, in the parents’ view, gives the child the right to and the desire for a social life among peers independent of the family. The parents trust that their child is able to actively turn toward various caregivers and environments. The day care facility is seen as a suitable means to this end—especially with regard to allowing their child to interact with other children. Parents would regard it as a deprivation if they were to withhold this opportunity from their child, opting instead for the family as the only environment in the child’s life. In this respect, they are mainly driven by their aim to maximize a child’s learning opportunities, which they see as best met in ECEC institutions. It is the last-mentioned aspect in particular in which the parental care agenda of the middle class—which can, at the same time, be interpreted as ideas about early childhood education—is set apart from that of working class families.

As implied earlier, these ideas go hand in hand with a family’s economic and cultural capital.<sup>11</sup> This point is not without relevance for the decision on whether

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<sup>11</sup> These ideas as well as parental practices have to be seen against the background of the particular national politics, the childcare, and the family policy tools such as spending on in-kind benefits (in particular, childcare services) or spending on cash transfers (OECD 2011, pp. 55–65).



children are to be cared for outside the home in ECEC institutions before they are 3 years old and—one neglected aspect in the Norwegian study—whether additional organized education and care provisions are taken advantage of. In the few parents' surveys available, mothers from *low-income families* in Germany comment on the financial burdens they would have to face if their children were to attend ECEC institutions, such as money for group funds, excursions, or food (BMFSFJ 2010b, p. 12). Parents also mention these concerns as an obstacle to the participation of children in additional extracurricular educational provisions (BMFSFJ 2010b). These parents regard early childhood education, including opportunities besides day care services, not only as (too) cost intensive but also as overrated (Merkle and Wippermann 2008). Parents who belong to the “*mainstream middle class*,” that is, parents with an average household income and average educational level, show only limited willingness to spend money on the care of their young children outside the home (Merkle and Wippermann 2008). This parents' survey, which was conducted throughout Germany, also shows that parents from *high-income families*, whose children visit daycare institutions, frequently criticize the early childhood education services provided by these facilities as insufficient. Consequently, they draw on other, privately organized institutions for everything they regard as not being provided ideally by the kindergarten. Parent groups with *middle income*, however, consider the ECEC as it is to be an effective “measure” to support their child's development (Merkle and Wippermann 2008).

Other differences emerge when it comes to parents' expectations of kindergartens. A survey conducted among parents of children older than 3 in Germany demonstrated that parents' expectations that the kindergarten should make a contribution to educating their child and preparing it for later school attendance are connected strongly to a family's particular cultural capital (Honig et al. 2004): It is particularly parents with a *low educational level* who expect the facility to provide a clear preparation for school, whereas parents from a well-to-do background tend to have much lower expectations with regard to this. However, this finding should not be interpreted as an expression of lower educational aspirations. On the contrary, the British study by Vincent and Ball (see this book) states that parents from well-to-do backgrounds in particular create a daily life for their child, both consciously and unconsciously, that is shaped by a variety of learning opportunities and contact with knowledge from the traditional educational canon. This happens—if not in ECEC institutions—within the family, but most of all in the form of privately organized sports or creative activities in which their children participate in addition to attending preschool (see, for Germany, Schreiber 2005).

These studies demonstrate that parental ideas are translated into action and shape a child's life. Aspects that become apparent include, on the one hand, the class-specific importance attached to early childhood education in a child's life and class-specific ideas about whether, and from when on, education should take place within ECEC institutions or (additionally) in other, semiprivately organized environments. On the other hand, it can be confirmed that the common premise for the different reasoning is the child's needs. This is a vital insight, also considering that it makes it possible to establish relationships to childcare policies. An expansion of

welfare-state activities and programs for the youngest children is legitimated by the specific shelter, learning, and development needs of children (Olk and Hübenthal 2011).

## Conclusion

By analyzing parents' childhood education and care strategies and agenda as well as the importance they attach to early childhood education, I have been able to work out class-specific childhood patterns of preschoolers in the context of current research.

The findings demonstrate that not all parents position themselves to the same extent concerning the politically motivated association of a “good” childhood with an early “educational childhood” in the public sector that is currently taking shape in Germany. Their position on this matter depends strongly on their social position. It has been shown that political conditions of early childhood education and care can accommodate specific groups of parents—in the case of Norway, for instance, middle-class parents (Stefansen and Farstad 2010) have parental ideas about a “good childhood” that correspond to a real-life care provision desired by politics and propagated as right. At the same time, these care structures designed by politicians discredit the ideas on childcare of working class parents. Parental ideas are thus met—or as is the case for the Norwegian working class—not met based on the characteristic of belonging to a social class. Concepts of a “good childhood,” as manifested in the political conditions of ECEC, are an expression of the balance of power in a society. They are the outcome of social negotiation processes insofar as they are subject to struggles for the privilege of interpretation, in which only the specific ideas of some social groups manage to hold their ground. In this context, the disagreement between political concepts of a “good childhood” and parental ideas (among certain social groups) is not an arbitrary phenomenon. It is a systematic, unintended, and/or accepted “side effect” entailed in the symbolic domination (Bourdieu 2002) that goes hand in hand with inequality-relevant implications. The research project *educare* (see footnote 4) aims to cast light on this problem in Germany in a comparison of western and eastern Germany. The focus is not just on the merely dichotomous categories of agreement or disagreement between the political and parental agendas because the empirically observable care strategies, which are clearly associated with a certain social class, fall short given the complex designs of a “good childhood” and ideas of early childhood education and care.<sup>12</sup>

Further insight could be provided by a close assessment of the governmental instruments and political strategies involved in different childcare policies, also in a

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<sup>12</sup> Stefansen and Farstad (2010) report hybrid education and care strategies that are associated with neither a socially homogeneous group of parents nor conclusively with one of the two class-specific “cultures of care” the authors have developed.

cross-national approach. Consequently, it would be necessary to evaluate how these policies and strategies form the way people speak about children and childhood and, like Saraceno (1984) says, how governments evaluate the adequacy of families and assess children's needs in the context of the institutions they have created (Saraceno 1984, p. 351). These research questions in childhood studies are of particular relevance when they are being contrasted with questions on the reproduction of social inequality at preschool and elementary school age.

In conclusion, it should be said that relevant empirical research relates to a continuity of parental practices and agendas: For middle-class parents with elementary-school-age children, studies also show (school) education-driven practices of childcare and designs of everyday life as presented above. Consequently, it can be assumed that parents continue in their educational efforts, which they start at an early age of the child, as children grow older. Hence, although the location of institutionalized education and care is changing (from the day care institution/kindergarten to the elementary school), the principles of the design of everyday life initiated and practiced within a family, primarily with regard to organized leisure activities, remain and are continued in the same form, though possibly slightly more frequently as the child grows older (Hofferth 2008; Lareau and Weininger 2008). The same holds true for the continuity of working class parents' education and care strategies. It can be assumed that this is where lasting inequalities among children appear that consolidate the early advantages or disadvantages of the children—particularly with regard to their educational career in formal institutions.

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# Child Well-Being in the UK: Children's Views of Families

Colette McAuley

The well-being of children in the UK is currently the subject of renewed debate as a result of the publication of the recent UNICEF report comparing child well-being in the UK with Spain and Sweden (UNICEF 2011). This report was commissioned following the result of the earlier UNICEF Report Card 7: *An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries* (2007) wherein 21 countries were compared and the UK was at the bottom of the league table. The aim of this latest research was to explore some of the reasons behind these statistics. It paid particular attention to the interplay between materialism, inequality, and well-being.

The message from all the children who participated in the latest research was clear: their well-being centres on time with a happy family whose interactions are consistent and secure; having good friends; and having plenty of things to do, especially outdoors. This fits well with what we know already from earlier consultations with children and their families about how they see well-being and what makes for a good childhood (Layard and Dunn 2009; Morgan 2005, 2010). One of the overriding findings of this latest report was that the availability of parents to spend time with their children appeared to be a particular concern for both parents and children within the UK. Again, there have been echoes of this in earlier research.

A recent national consultation with parents and young people in England found a high degree of consensus about the factors that determine a good childhood as well as those that undermine it (Counterpoint 2008). All were agreed that family was of the paramount importance in determining the well-being of children. Friends, schools/teachers, and other outside factors (such as activities outside school, television, and the wider community) were the other three categories identified. The lack of a safe environment, due to the extent of violence and aggression, was seen to be

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a major undermining factor. Pressure to earn more money, limited family time, pressure to buy things, political correctness, and the UK not being a child- or family-friendly culture were the other undermining factors identified.

The importance of family and significant relationships to children's well-being is also emerging from reports by children in recent research in Australia. Jan Mason and colleagues at the University of New South Wales have been interested for some time in how children conceptualize their own well-being (Fattore et al. 2009). Their recent qualitative study with children in the general school population aimed to explore children's views of what constitutes well-being, what meaning they ascribe to the concept, and whether distinct dimensions of well-being could be identified. It involved 123 children aged between 8 and 15. The authors concluded that "The underlying mediums through which children understood experiences of well-being are children's significant relationships and emotional life" (Fattore et al. 2009, p. 61).

On a more general level, there is a growing recognition that, if we are to further develop our knowledge of this topic, we need to ask children directly about their understanding of what constitutes well-being (Ben-Arieh 2010). It is also now recognized that there are areas of well-being in which we particularly need to capture children's perspectives such as in relation to their emotional and social relationships (Ben-Arieh 2008).

It seems timely then to examine what we know about children's views of family life in the UK. This chapter is devoted to drawing together some of the available evidence to inform us about how family life impacts on children's well-being.

## **Children's Views of Families**

### ***Children and Families in the UK***

Eleven and a half million children under the age of 16 lived in the UK in 2009 (Population Trends 2010). They were growing up in a variety of family types. For example, 24% of children were living in a lone-parent family—the highest proportion of children living in lone-parent families in the European Union (Bradshaw 2011). Irrespective of family structure, the vast majority of children grow up in loving homes. However, some children live in families in which there is domestic violence and one or both parents have mental health problems or misuse alcohol or drugs. In these situations, parenting capacity to meet the developmental needs of their children may be impaired (Cleaver et al. 1999, 2007). Over 39,000 children were the subject of a child protection plan in England in the year ending 31 March 2010 (Department for Education 2010a). And some children are admitted to care (foster family care or residential care), predominantly as a result of neglect and/or abuse. In the year ending 31 March 2010, there were 64,400 looked after children (children in care as the result of a court order or accommodated at the parent's request) (Department for Education 2010b).

Research evidence is readily available on family lives and the joys and difficulties encountered. However, only recently have we had studies in the UK that directly seek the children's perspectives. Here we examine some of the available evidence from children on living in a range of different family types, living in families experiencing difficulties, and finally living in substitute families.

### *Children Living in Different Family Types*

Brannen et al. (2000) surveyed the views of 941 schoolchildren (aged 10–12) in two local education authorities in South London and later interviewed 63 of these children. They asked the children to reflect on family life both in terms of what it meant to them but also what they thought it should be. Children were drawn from two-parent, lone-mother, step-parent, and foster families. The overarching finding was of the importance of family for the children. Far more important than family structure was the way family life was lived:

*That's something like in fairytale land when they show the happy couple walking and they're going with their children and their dog to this place. But I don't think there's any such thing as a happy family—or a perfect family. There is a happy happy families but not perfect families.... say you're on your own and one parent, you still get love, that's still a family. Because family's all about love. (Inderpal, South Asian origin boy, lone-mother family)*

Love and care provided consistently and every day were the most crucial factors in helping the children to develop a good sense of self and to feel secure and safe. No matter which of the family types they lived in, the children considered their birth parents very important (in their inner circle of significant relationships).

The children identified birth siblings as second only in relative importance to birth parents. They identified extended family members and friends and some included figures such as teachers, doctors, and social workers. The study particularly emphasized that these children were pragmatic actors—accepting different family forms as long as parents provide them with love and affection. They were also active contributors to family life, able to sense the feelings of parents and siblings, to convey empathy, and to give and receive support:

*If I had a job I would look after my mum... if she needs help with her bills or anything like that, I would be glad to help. (Elliott, a black boy in a lone-mother household)*

*It's not fair. They go out and work all day, then they have to come home and do everything for you. (Anna, a white girl, living in a step family)*

*If she (mother) finds she has any problems she'll talk to me a little. (Latasha, a black girl living with two parents)*

*I love her. I'll be there when she's old and that's it. (Lee, a white boy living with two parents)*

They used wide definitions of family, including a wide range of kin beyond those they live with as well as friends, pets, and professionals. The evidence suggested



that the children's relationships with their family and siblings were particularly important at transition points such as at the move to secondary school when friendships are often subject to change.

### ***Children Living in Families in Which There Are Domestic Violence, Parental Ill Health, or Parental Substance Abuse***

We also know more recently about children's views on living in families in which there are domestic violence, parental ill health, or parental substance abuse. Gorin's (2004) review of UK studies in the period 1990–2003 also emphasizes that children in these situations actively participate in negotiating roles and responsibilities in their families. At times though, in these circumstances, they may have little or no choice about providing emotional and physical support to their parents. However, some indicate that they do not resent this because they feel needed and want to do this for them.

They are often more aware of the problems than their parents realize, even if they do not fully understand the reasons. Some behaviours do make them frightened and confused, the most distressing being violence and conflict. This is often compounded by the unpredictability of the parents' moods and behaviour:

*I'm frightened to leave her in case she goes into a fit or something. When we were little... she got really down and started taking overdoses and that really scared us... when she's really down she says I'm going to take an overdose... I'm frightened to leave her. (Newton and Becker 1996, p. 25)*

*It's not just the caring that affects you... in fact we're a close family and we all pull together. What really gets you is the worry of it all, having a parent who is ill and seeing them in such a state... of course it's upsetting, you think about it a lot. Someone who is close to you and desperately ill is pretty hard to deal with. (Frank 1995, p. 42)*

Feelings of insecurity and living in an unsafe environment can impact on their school lives, with children often being unable to concentrate whilst in school. As a direct result of the parental difficulties, they may miss days at school or indeed have a succession of house and school moves.

Friendships can be a source of support, but making and maintaining them can be especially difficult for children in these circumstances, and this may leave them increasingly isolated. The stigma and secrecy too can perpetuate their sadness and isolation. They may experience bullying and, in the worst situations, some may feel depressed. As we shall discuss later, children who stand out as different because of something about themselves or their families are likely to be the target of bullies. The stigma associated with violent and addictive behaviours and associated chaotic and impoverished lifestyles is also likely to influence how children see themselves:

*They (local youths) used to bully, they used to bully us, well they used to bully me. And hit, and punch me and everything... and they would go "At least I haven't got a mental dad" or something. (Aldridge and Becker 2003, p. 81)*

Yet, the studies convey that many of these children may have very close relationships with their parents. They can have a very strong sense of love and loyalty towards them, even if torn between that and feelings of anger, hurt, resentment, and embarrassment:

*It can get difficult but it's good afterwards knowing I've helped my mum. I enjoy helping my mum, I only wish it could be a bit easier: (Bibby and Becker 2000, p. 44)*

*I can't bear it that he hits her. I feel so ashamed. I always worry that the neighbours will hear or that the teachers will find out at school... I felt really nervous about talking to you, and guilty about talking to you because my mum and dad are wonderful—they are really good people... really good parents and they love me a lot and they have done everything they can for me. It's not their fault, it's just the way it is with them. (Mullender et al. 2002, p. 108)*

They may worry about their parents, both in relation to their parents' safety and ability to look after themselves. Often, they are in a parental role with them, at least when their parents are less able to cope with family responsibilities. This echoes findings from recent consultations with young carers in general, revealing that they often have to assume parental responsibilities and, as a direct consequence, may lose out on the usual opportunities of childhood to socialize with friends and fully participate in school (Morgan 2006).

Children living in families in which there is domestic violence, parental ill health, or substance abuse use a range of coping strategies, the most common of which appears to be avoidance or distraction. Moreover, children in the same household may react quite differently. Some take positive action using informal networks to seek confidential support and the opportunity to get away from the situation at home. From their accounts, however, few would feel comfortable in directly seeking help from professionals. However, they thought that confidential helplines might be useful.

## *Children in Care*

The majority of children who enter care in the UK have been admitted as a result of abuse or neglect. In many cases, there is a history of long-standing serious problems within the families. Many young people have reflected on their general experience in care as positive, although aspects of their care experience may have had a significant impact on their close relationships.

A study by Skuse and Ward (2003, 2012) retrospectively interviewed 49 children and young people about their experiences of accommodation and care. The majority valued their time in accommodation or care for the experiences and opportunities it offered to them including self-development, and they thought that their lives would have been worse had they remained at home:

*I think it was a good thing and I've come a long way... I just feel I am a better person. I don't think I would have gone back into school or done as well in school and wanted to go on to college, as what I would have if I had stayed at home. (Girl speaking of her period in care from the age of 15–18 years)*

*I think at the time it was better... now I think it is good because it was guaranteed that I was safe... because I came here because I was getting beaten at home. It is a good idea and it's not, because I miss my brothers and it upsets me for... the first few days after I've been to see them. But it is a good idea because it's a guarantee I have safety.* (Girl reflecting on period in care from the age of 7–10 years)

However, in consultations, children report two key consequences of being in care. One is that the longer a child spends in care, the higher the risk of losing contact with birth parents, family, and previous friends (Morgan 2009a). The other is that living in care very often separates brothers and sisters (Morgan 2009b).

Although their home circumstances were difficult, living apart from their birth families, friends, and the places they know can also be very painful. McAuley (1996a, b) interviewed a cohort of 19 primary school-age children on three occasions during the first 2 years of their planned long-term foster placements. She found that most were thinking and dreaming about their birth families over time whilst in placement:

*I dream about Daddy taking me out... I dream about all of them (his birth family) some nights... It's a happy dream... playing football in a field.* (Boy of 9 years)

In most cases, their parents had had mental health difficulties, addiction problems, or involvement in domestic violence, and the consequent neglect had precipitated their need for care. As in Gorin's (2004) review, the children often were very loyal and loved their birth parents, irrespective of their behaviours. Most wanted contact with birth parents and siblings. Many were placed apart from siblings or had siblings still living at home. In some cases, these young children appeared to sense the vulnerability of their parents with addictions, and they wanted contact to reassure themselves about their safety. Where children were in a parental role with younger siblings, they sought contact for the same reasons:

*Every night in bed ... how she is getting on ... I worry about her ... same for brothers and sisters ... I worry about them too ... I worry most about mum ... feel sad.* (Girl of 8 years speaking of her birth mother and siblings)

In the follow-up study a decade later, McAuley (2005, 2006) asked them as young adults to reflect on their care experience. Most had had regular contact with their birth family over time, and they emphasized the importance of this contact to them, some thinking that it should have been more frequent. On the whole, contact was sought by and was a positive experience for this group. The young people conveyed the respect shown by the foster carers for their birth family and birth identity. Where there was such respect, the young people deeply appreciated this and felt more secure in their placements. Other studies have found that looked after children generally want contact with their birth families and often want it more frequently than they get it (Cleaver 2000; Shaw 1998; Sinclair et al. 2005).

However, for the more troubled young people, contact with birth parents at times brought further rejection and/or abuse along with the re-enactment of earlier dysfunctional family patterns. For them, contact brought the realization that their birth parents continued to blame them for disclosures of abuse and had not accepted

responsibility for their behaviour. Evidence from other studies suggests that contact with specific family members may be harmful, particularly when there has been serious dysfunction (Sinclair 2005; Sinclair et al. 2005). Questions have been raised about the evidence on long-term outcomes (Quinton et al. 1997). We know from this that decisions about contact need to be made for each individual child, in consultation with them where possible, and be subject to regular review.

### **Children on Multiple Placement and School Moves**

For many years, research studies have highlighted the multiple changes of placement experienced by children in care (Jackson 2001; Rowe and Lambert 1973). Of the 49 children interviewed in the Skuse and Ward study (2003), 13 had had six or more placements whilst being looked after, and this included one young person with 27 moves.

Multiple changes of school have also been highlighted by many research studies (Bullock et al. 2001; Jackson 2001), and in most cases, these are found to be related to placement moves. This means that children coming into care or moving within care may be moved from their home, school, and community settings at the one time. All the positive supportive relationships they have built up with family, friends, teachers, carers, and neighbours are no longer there and will only be maintained with effort. From an ecological development viewpoint, these children were being removed from their familiar network of relationships and placed, usually on their own, in a totally new environment.

In the McAuley study (1996a, b), 15 of the 17 children who had attended primary school previously had had to change school as a result of moving to the study placement. Over half of these children expressed sadness and/or confusion about leaving their previous schools. Many felt sad at the loss of contact with teachers and friends. A number had already moved school before for the same reason. The extent of the anxiety felt by some children about this was well illustrated by a boy of 10 years who had had multiple moves:

*I don't want to move foster home again cos I might have to move school. (Boy who had multiple care and school placements)*

Shortage of available long-term placements meant that placements offered were often in completely different areas and considerable distances from where they had been living and attending schools. In the follow-up study (McAuley 2006), we learnt that most children experienced a decade of stability in foster care and schooling. However, for the most troubled young people, instability in both continued throughout primary and secondary years.

The Skuse and Ward study (2003) points out that children being looked after may sometimes enter care with a history of interrupted schooling, and this pattern may continue once they return to their families. They also made the useful distinction between routine moves when children transfer to secondary school with their peers

and when children move school on their own. The latter is often midterm when friendships are developed and classes well advanced for the year:

*I hate changing school. I've done it all my life ... and I'm just sick of it ... I have to make friends and everything ... It was okay when I went to X (name of school) 'cause I 'd made friends from my previous school and it was like we were all going there as a group. I just can't be bothered to make friends and I just don't like being the new kid. I've always been the new kid and I don't like it.* (Boy reflecting on care period from the age of 9–12 years)

Alongside this, it is very important to acknowledge that some placement and school changes may be viewed positively by the children involved. In consultations, children caution that placement changes need to be evaluated according to the needs of each particular child at any given time (Morgan 2009b).

### **Children on Living in Foster Families and Developing New Relationships**

In the follow-up study cited above (McAuley 2006), many of the young people described what a difference their foster carers had made to their lives. Seven of the young people had remained for the rest of their childhoods with the planned foster carers, and two had chosen to remain living with them after leaving care. Others had established their separate homes but were in close contact with their former carers. Over the years, they had become part of the family, their extended family, and the community in which they lived. They described sensing that they were accepted and wanted and how they were treated as their own children:

*The last few years of my life have been happy ... I've always had the feeling that I've been loved, always been wanted ... nobody would know what they (the foster carers) mean to me, what they have done for me. They took me out of something bad and gave me something good. They always make me feel special.* (Young adult referring to his foster carers)

Children in these situations described the foster carers' sense of pride in their achievements at home, school, and work. It was clear that they really trusted them and welcomed their support during and following care. They continued to be regarded as part of the family. One girl was delighted to be invited to be the flower girl at their daughter's wedding. She also shared how her foster carers had persuaded a local shopkeeper to give her work experience. Two young men described how their carers had helped them to decorate and furnish their first flat or their future marital home. There was a strong sense that these foster carers had made a huge and continuing commitment to them.

The small number of young people whose lives remained more troubled provided rich reflections on some key issues. Central for them was the ability to trust new adults in their lives who were offering care and advice. They found this particularly difficult. They had all experienced severe rejection and/or abuse by their parents early in childhood, and they described how they had never or only partly been able to trust anyone since then. They displayed emotional and behavioural difficulties and mental health problems. These young people expressed anger at the lack of access to and provision of appropriate therapeutic help for them during their lengthy periods in care. We know from the recent national prevalence study of

looked after children in England (Meltzer et al. 2003) that 45% of looked after children and young people aged 5–17 years had a diagnosable mental health disorder and that there is widespread concern about the need for further development of child and adolescent services to meet their needs. There is evidence of considerable investment to prevent or alleviate such problems with the introduction of evidence-based programmes for parents and substitute carers (McAuley and Davis 2009).

On a more positive note, recent thinking on the impact of early experiences would suggest that there is room for more optimism about change over time in a responsive environment (Aldgate 2010; Aldgate and Jones 2006). Indeed, in the follow-up study, one of the troubled young women described how she had eventually developed trust in a subsequent foster carer who remained as a key support figure to her as a young mother in adulthood.

## Discussion and Conclusion

One of the legacies of the New Labour Government was the addition of the term “child well-being” into public policy and legislation in the UK. As such, it marked a significant shift in the language used to describe the government’s aspirations for children and signalled a departure from past practices of framing policy in terms of “child care” and “the welfare of children” (Rose et al. 2006; Rose and Rowlands 2010). The concept was rapidly incorporated into policy and professional debates concerning children’s services (Axford 2009). However, there have been concerns about its conceptual elusiveness and its ambiguous and unstable usage within public policy in England (Ereaut and Whiting 2008).

Of particular interest to us here was one of the findings of the national consultation of parents, carers, and young people about what they thought contributed to a good or content childhood (Counterpoint 2008). It emerged that people in England today were not engaged regularly in such debates. That in itself seems a really important point. The fact that the participants had a great deal to offer when they reflected upon it further begs the question about why this does not happen regularly. The involvement of parents, carers, and young people in defining what it is that we want for our children seems crucial (McAuley and Rose 2010). Perhaps the recent UNICEF (2011) report will stimulate the much needed debates in government but also within communities and families.

On an international level, there is considerable interest in child well-being and how we can develop indicators to permit cross-country comparisons. Current conceptualizations of well-being are inclusive of all children, start from the child as the focus of analysis, adopt an ecological model of development, recognize the many dimensions of children’s lives, and see children as acting and interacting with multiple influences in their environment (Ben-Arieh 2008). The child indicators movement is new but rapidly expanding (Ben-Arieh 2010). One of the most interesting recent developments in the field has been the growing realization that we need to include subjective accounts along with objective measures as indicators of well-being. This means that we need to directly consult children on their views. And, as

indicated earlier, it is also now recognized that there are areas of well-being in which we particularly need to capture children's perspectives such as in relation to their emotional and social relationships (Ben-Arieh 2008).

This chapter has drawn together evidence from research studies in the UK that have focused on the perspectives of children on aspects of their family life. The intention was to inform us about how family life impacts on children's well-being. Throughout the studies, there was clear evidence of children wanting to have their say as well as actively shaping their lives. We also had a clear demonstration of how central family life and relationships with significant others are for them. Their awareness of what is happening within their families, their sensitivity to the feelings of other family members, and the support they gave as well as received within families were apparent. The three dimensions of well-being identified by the children in the study by Fattore et al. (2009)—having a positive sense of self, sense of agency, and sense of security and safety—permeated their accounts. The challenge for us now is to consider how best to enhance the well-being of those children for whom these issues were particularly pertinent.

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# The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes

Carol Vincent, Nicola Rollock, Stephen Ball, and David Gillborn

This chapter draws on data collected as part of a 2-year-funded project into the “educational strategies of the Black middle classes.”<sup>1</sup> The project explores and analyses the educational perspectives, strategies, and experiences of Black-Caribbean-heritage, middle-class families. The demands of being a parent from a minority ethnic group and having to navigate a White-dominated education system have not received a great deal of attention in the UK (although see, for exceptions, Archer 2010; Crozier and Davies 2007; Reynolds 2005). Thus, our research seeks to address a set of complex and relatively neglected questions embedded in the intricate relations between race, social class, and education. Through the study as a whole, we also intend to contribute to the understanding of the intersections of race and class and deconstruct those generalizations used in the media and in research that tend to position Black British people as a homogeneous working class group.

Our data is drawn from 77 qualitative semi-structured interviews with 62 parents who self-define as of Black Caribbean heritage. Aware of the increasing number of Black Caribbeans who have a partner outside of their ethnic group,<sup>2</sup> families were included in which one or both of the parents self-define as Black Caribbean. Participants were recruited through a range of sources that included announcements on family and education websites, Black professional networks and social groups,

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<sup>2</sup>Nearly half (48%) of Black Caribbean men in Britain have a partner from a different ethnic group; the highest interethnic relationship rate with the exception of those of mixed heritage backgrounds. The figure for Black Caribbean women is 34% (Platt 2009).

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as well as through extensive use of snowballing via existing contacts within the professional Black community. Participants were selected following completion of a brief filter questionnaire that asked about their ethnic group identification, the age of their children, and their occupation. We were interested in speaking with those parents with at least one child between 8 and 18 years—age groups that encompass key transition points in their school careers. With regard to class categorization, we sought parents sometimes referred to as the “service class” (Goldthorpe 1995), those in professional or managerial occupations, that is, the top two categories of the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classifications (NS-SEC) on its 8-point scale commonly used to indicate class location in UK social science. As is common in research on “parents,” most of our respondents are mothers. However, sensitive to debates about the role of Black men as fathers (see, e.g., Reynolds 2009), 13 of our interviews are with fathers. Interviews were carried out in London and elsewhere in England, and we returned to 15 of our 62 respondents in order to conduct follow-up interviews (giving us 77 interviews in total). These second interviews allowed us to ask additional questions on themes that arose from our analysis of the initial interviews, but were not part of our original research schedule (e.g., we asked whether and in what ways respondents talked with their children about racism), or to revisit original themes in more depth (e.g., the complex relationship between race and class in the formation of identity). We analysed the data in two main ways: (a) NVivo software was used for data management and search purposes. These searches were used to bring together theme and topic data that were then subject to detailed hand coding. (b) Hand coding was employed as a means to identify and examine key themes and issues. This was begun early in the research process and involved all members of the research team, which provided a basis for coding reliability. We built up a portfolio of themes and issues that was subject to continuing review and revision. Careful comparisons were undertaken within the data, and a fine-grained examination of particular themes such as strategies in relation to interactions with teachers, perceptions about social class, and talking with children about race and racism was conducted.

## Race or Class?

In considering the respective roles and relationships of race and class in the constitution of identity as a Black middle-class parent and the consequent shaping of educational strategies, the writings on intersectionality are helpful. In a seminal paper, Crenshaw (1993) has emphasized that identities are not reducible to just one dimension; that a theoretical focus on, say, class can simplify and reduce; and through reduction, miss and misrepresent the experiences of, for example, Black working class women and the interrelated roles of race and gender in their lives. Indeed, race and class are themselves multidimensional categories. Therefore, an intersectional perspective is needed. Brar and Phoenix (2004, p. 76) define

intersectionality as “signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts.”

Intersectionality emphasizes fluidity and the importance of different locales, situations, spaces, times, different dispositions, and subjectivities for understanding particular interactions and identities. This fluidity is both a strength and a weakness. Intersectionality has been criticized for being too incomplete, too general a theory—what Davis has called “inherently hazy and mystifyingly open ended” (Davis 2008, p. 69)—to offer any analytical depth. The term itself, suggestive of intersecting sections, can present a misleadingly reified and essentialist view of, say, being female or being Black. Mindful of this ambiguity, Phoenix and Pattynama (2006, p. 187) refer to intersectionality as “a handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positionings that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it.” However, despite Phoenix and Pattynama’s implicit warning of the dangers of superficial approaches to intersectionality, the reminder of the need for an analysis that holds multiple positionings in tension is valuable in itself.

Youdell (2011) cites Judith Butler’s (1997) description of the “cross-cutting modalities of life” when introducing her own concept of a “constellation of discourses and the identity categories they constitute” that can help

tease out the nuanced processes of subjectivization. The notion of constellation has been useful to me because it asks how classificatory systems (e.g., gender or race) and their categories (boy/girl, White/Black) come to be meaningful to other classifications and categories within particular constellations. (Youdell 2011, pp. 43–44)

In relation to our study, respondents understand the positioning of their Black, middle-classed, and gendered identities differently; they vary in how they understand the interaction of race and class in their lives, and they appreciate that their identities “play out” differently in interactions with particular schools and teachers (see, also, Rollock et al. 2011a).

With reference to our particular “constellation” of class and race in constituting Black middle-class parenting strategies, one recent and well-known piece of research into childrearing styles by Annette Lareau (2003) suggests that “the largest differences in the organization of children’s daily lives—including familial networks and styles of interaction with institutional representatives—are across the lines of class, not race” (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau 2003, p. 341). We understand how Lareau, working with Black and White families differentiated by class, reached her conclusions. However, we suggest, in relation to our study, which focused entirely on middle-class Black parents, that the appropriate question is not whether class *or* race is more or less influential in the organization of children’s lives. Taking an approach influenced by intersectionality allows us to explore the differences and commonalities of Black parents’ experiences and to consider how race, class, and/or gender interact in particular situations and interactions. Thus, for different parents at different points in time and in different interactions, race, class, and/or

gender can come to the fore.<sup>3</sup> This is what Horvat (2003, p. 1), citing Collins (1991), refers to as the “both/and nature of race and class.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, in other writing, we explore the differences between the parents in their priorities and actions, exploring this via the notion of “family habitus” (Vincent et al. 2012). In response to the limitations of what can be said in one chapter, we use the space here to focus on the clear areas of similarity and commonality between the parent respondents in terms of the educational challenges they identified and the strategies they developed in order to overcome them.

## Challenges and Strategies

The parents with whom we spoke identified a number of challenges they had to address during the school career of their children. These challenges include: low expectations on the part of teachers, racism and institutional racism, and stereotypes of Black parents as being uninterested in and lacking in knowledge about education, along with teen resistance and the peer group effect. We shall now discuss each in more detail. Space allows only illustrative quotes, but these are representative of the views of other parents not cited here. In addition, we give references to other writing in which the issues noted are discussed in more detail.

### *Low Teacher Expectations*

Previous research on the experience of Black-Caribbean-heritage students has highlighted their disproportionate representation in exclusions from school and in low-ranked teaching groups (see, e.g., Gillborn 2008; Gillborn and Youdell 2000; John 2006; Richardson 2007; Rollock 2007). Students’ social class background is not the only factor here. Indeed, Black middle-class students appear to attain fewer GCSE qualifications during compulsory schooling than their White middle-class counterparts. The UK Youth Cohort Study of 2007, for example, shows that 72.7% of White children whose parents have occupations in the top two NS-SEC categories gained

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<sup>3</sup>Gender is extremely important in this project. For example, we shall be writing about the differential positioning of Black boys and girls by both their teachers and parents. However, in this chapter, the focus is on the interaction of class and race. Additionally, as already noted, the majority of our respondents were women. The way in which the apparently neutral “parent” and “parenting” come to mean, in practice, “mother” and “mothering” has been discussed elsewhere (Vincent 2010).

<sup>4</sup>We are not suggesting that Lareau is asserting that class is more defining of Black parents’ experiences than race. Elsewhere, her colleague Horvat describes Lareau’s recent work as “illustrat[ing] the layered effect of race and class on children’s experiences” (Horvat 2003, p. 3).

5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*–C (5 GCSEs at these grades is seen as a minimum requirement for schools and pupils).<sup>5</sup> A total of 61.6% of their Black-Caribbean-heritage, middle-class peers reached this threshold—a difference of nearly 10 percentage points. Low teacher expectations have long been documented in the UK and identified as a contributory factor in Black underachievement (see Coard 1971). The parents who participated in our research had had experiences themselves of being placed in lower teaching groups, being entered for lower status exams, and being told by teachers not to have too high an aspiration as regards their career choices:

There was one teacher who was encouraging me to pursue my A levels.... There was one teacher, I remember him doing that, but for the vast majority they talked about me going to work in the hospital as an auxiliary [nurse]. They talked about me going to work in a shop. Not even office based. That was the level of expectation. (Joan, Local education authority manager)

All the parents with whom we spoke understood low teacher expectations to be a potential risk to their children, (see Gillborn et al. 2012 for further details) and spoke of a sense that good behaviour and average attainments by Black children are accepted as sufficient by too many teachers:

There was a test [son] did and I think he got five out of 35 and this was accepted and as I was looking through the exercise book, I thought what is this?... that's just not acceptable and I wanted to know why wasn't I called in, why wasn't I briefed? Why is this just the norm? (Cynthia, teacher)

In the final year the expectations from some of [son's] teachers, you picked up that they said "Well you got a pass, so what more do you want? Where we weren't expecting you to get a pass."... [Eventually] he got a mixture of A stars. As, I think his lowest grade was a B for sociology. (Vanessa, community development officer)

In response, parent respondents in the study show what has been called elsewhere a "managed trust" (Vincent and Martin 2002) of the school. That is, they support their children's school and their children's progress through school, and, in so doing, they engage in a considerable amount of monitoring and surveillance of both the child and the school. White middle-class parents engage in this careful monitoring too (Vincent and Martin 2002), but for the Black parent respondents, their awareness and experience of discrimination adds an acuteness and intensity to their surveillance. They are proactive in building a relationship with the school; they email questions and ask for meetings, drawing the teacher's attention to (and the phrase is a considered one) their concerns:

My partner says very nicely, "I just wanted to draw your attention to..." you know. So you have to kind of do it strategically. (Barbara, child health professional)

At every single stage of my child's education, I make sure that they are not under the radar. This is ridiculous how much I bother their teachers to make sure that they know that there is a child here. (Alice, senior researcher, voluntary sector)

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<sup>5</sup>GCSE exams are taken at 16 years of age in a range of subjects. Getting the top four grades A\*, A, B, or C is generally regarded as a "good" pass. Schools are judged by how many of their pupils attain at least 5 A\*–C grades. This number (now usually including such grades in English and Maths) is seen as a key benchmark in the English educational system. Thanks to Paul Connelly for running this analysis.

[Son has] just started secondary school and I'm seeing some of the same traits in the children that I'm working with who are underachieving... I need to devise a strategy to ensure that this boy achieves....There's a lethargy about homework, peer pressure, I'm seeing a lack of interest in the curriculum, I'm seeing... some stereotyping from perhaps some of the teachers, maybe one or two, and since I've identified that, I've probably been down to school twice now just to check on him... The teachers have been very, very supportive, but also very surprised that I've wanted to see them before parents' evening or before they asked me to. (Anne, Local Authority education adviser)

As the quote from Anne suggests, parents engage in "conversation" with teachers (Vincent and Martin 2002) designed to develop a dialogue of equals. "Conversation" is considered, polite, reasoning in its tone, and drawing on class-based and embodied resources of confidence and knowledge. Cassandra runs her own company; her husband is a senior doctor. She describes a conversation with the head teacher of her daughters' infant school:

We talked about some of the books they used, I did not think they were very multicultural, erm, and I just gently flagged that up, and you know they changed all the books. It was awesome really. This is perhaps another example where class and race can merge.... I did not go in there as you know "we are Black people and you should not have this and that and the other." [Rather] "it is a little bit dated and it would be really good... if the children could have resources that would reflect their experiences." Well [coming from] Black parents who work in business and medicine, whatever, [the head teacher] took it on board. (Cassandra)

The following description from Ella illustrates how "conversation" can operate when actually making a complaint. Her son has a teacher whose behaviour towards him seems, through the child's eyes, inconsistent. Although broadly happy with school, Ella has identified in the past instances in which she thinks her son, a minority pupil in a largely White school, has been unfairly treated. Parents' evening is approaching, and in the interview with us, Ella considers her strategy in detail, what exactly she is going to say in her allocated 10-min slot, her words, her tone. Her aim is

to make sure that she knows we are very gentle parents "we want to work with you,"... To make sure she realizes at the end that I will expect her to be professional and fair with [son] and nothing less will do. But I am going to find out how to do that in a touchy feely, keep her in her safety zone, not too threatening, but under no illusion that we are not to be walked over. Now that's a challenge! (Ella, senior health care professional)

Parents' deployment of their class resources is a strategy we explore further below.

## ***Racism***

Parents spoke of how they themselves had frequently faced crude and overt racism during their childhoods from both peers and teachers. Generally, this form of racism was less of a feature in their children's lives. However, we heard of a particularly

distressing case faced by one teenage student at a private school who was the target of crude, overt racism sustained over a period of time:

Name calling... nigger, wog, coon, all this sort of thing, it was a daily occurrence... I said how did the other Black boys manage and he said they just ignored it, just pretend you're White and that way you can deal with it, but... he's always been brought up to be aware of who he is, no apologies for who he is... It got to the stage that he just didn't want to go any more, but he wasn't saying why he didn't want to go... and this went on for a year... and his marks started dropping as well ... When he left in the morning his head was down, he was hunched over. (Felicia, lawyer)

The private school involved was unable or unwilling to tackle the issue of racism and, instead, responded to Felicia's concerns by locating the problem within the child, first suggesting his deteriorating marks were a function of learning difficulties (tests revealed no learning difficulties), and thereafter focusing on the child's apparent self-presentation:

[The letter from the head teacher] talked about how [son] embraced the bling culture. I've never seen my son in any bling! ... If you look at his school reports, there's never been any suggestion of bad behaviour. (Felicia)

The accusation of "bling" (dressing in an extravagant style, and in particular the wearing of ostentatious jewellery, often associated with rappers) indicates another challenge of which parents spoke: the assumption that all Black families are working class and the associations made between working class Blackness and disreputable and disruptive behaviour (and, in this instance, vulgarity). Here, in the mind of this head teacher, class and race prejudices seem to elide, locating all Black boys as working class "other," far from being "people like us." ... The head teacher, as power-holder, can and does change the terms in which the situation can be discussed. Even if the child had "embraced the bling culture," it is not clear how this would explain, let alone justify, the racist abuse. Felicia is forced onto the terrain of the head's arguments, seeking to defend her son from the symbolic violence of stereotyping. The physical violence of the abuse is ignored by the head. Felicia's strategy here, acutely concerned as she is with her son's well-being, is to take him out of this school that has failed to protect him against racism and, furthermore, has stonewalled, denying her complaints apparently without investigation.

The majority of the parent respondents felt that whilst their children were still vulnerable to such crude racism on the streets, manifestations of racism in schools were now more likely to be subtle, embedded in often taken for granted, unaware assumptions and actions; in other words, institutionalized. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry defined institutionalized racism in the UK as:

The collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson 1999, p. 321)

Gillborn (2008, p. 27) cites Carmichael and Hamilton (1967, p. 112) as noting that institutional racism "originates in the established and respected forces in the



society, and thus receives far less public condemnation.” Institutional racism focuses on the consequences of actions rather than the intent. If the consequences are racist, then institutional racism is present regardless of individuals’ intentions. To give one example from our study: A mother with a daughter at a multiethnic school told us of a Gifted and Talented cohort identified by the school:

The school was running a Gifted and Talented programme ... they selected the young people who they saw as gifted and talented to be a part of this programme and started to do things with them, extended their experiences and opportunities and, as I say, I found out about it by default ... so they chose these young people and do you know what? All of them were White. (Malorie, education manager, local authority)

With other parents, Malorie took her concerns to the head teacher who accepted the criticism:

It’s not, the race issue is not something that we sit down and think, right is this racist? But this one, I couldn’t believe it! We started sending emails, and asking for clarification, and the emails were coming back and forth until we got a meeting with the head. Had a very good meeting with the head teacher, eerm, points were clearly taken, because subsequent years things changed.... It was disappointing that they had somehow managed to be this biased, we said “well did you not notice?”

Many parents, like Malorie, challenged the school when they perceived there to be issues of inequality. However, some parents noted that they were reluctant to name race and racism explicitly, because it caused White power-holders to become defensive. Ella explains:

I have never actually been in a situation [in relation to her son’s school] where I have gone out and said you are racist or I think this is an act of racism. It is something I am very reluctant to do because you get (claps her hands) shut down.... I would very much approach that I am going to go and deal with this situation. I am going to try and sort out this situation with you because I think once you mention to people you think they have been racist, they clam up. But what you can say is that this behaviour is a problem ... how can we tackle it and turn it round? (Ella, senior doctor)

Other parental strategies for combating and challenging racism included talking about racial inequality to the children:

My mother’s argument was always, you know, you have to be ten times better or a hundred times better than a White person. I don’t say it in exactly that way, I am not that direct with [daughter], but I do find myself saying to her, “You know life is not going to be easy.” ... [Discussions about race] are usually something that comes out in anecdotes, and to be fair to her, she listens and takes things seriously.... And she will actually ask me if something happens, and she will say to me “Do you think that was racist?” and so we are able to have those kind of conversations. (Lorraine, researcher)

However, exactly what to say was a contested area. Parents commonly described discussing media coverage of Black people for instance (“[Black women in soap operas] are never assertive, we are aggressive,” Jean, FE lecturer). But the degree to which one should be explicit about racism was debated. Richard, for example, asserts that for Black people “of course [race] has been an issue. I don’t care who you are or what you are, race has been an issue.” However, he is also concerned that racism does not become an excuse for his children to use.

“[Attitudes such as] ‘I didn’t do so well because I am Black.’ ‘I didn’t get this because I am Black.’ I would cry for days if that ever happened to my kids you know. And I’[d done] that to them” (Richard, director voluntary sector organization).

In summarizing this section, it is important to note that the parent respondents’ strategies of monitoring and surveillance look very similar to those deployed by White middle-class parents (Reay 1998; Vincent and Martin 2002). However, a closer consideration reveals the key role of race and racism, and how awareness and experience of racism leads the Black middle-class parent respondents to inflect and direct their strategies differently to their White middle-class counterparts.

### *Stereotypes of Black Parents*

Misrepresentation was an issue for parents, not only in relation to teacher assumptions concerning the children as indicated above, but also in relation to parents themselves. Black women felt they were facing caricatured and racist assumptions that they lack knowledge, articulation, and calm. “Sometimes people categorize you, they expect you to be whatever stereotypical kind of screeching, not able to articulate, black female” (Cassandra, Director of training company). Similarly, in the USA, Cooper (2007, p. 492) cites African American mothers in her research as being seen as “irrational, threatening, and combative” in their interactions with schools. Black women were often assumed to be lone mothers. Black men experienced being perceived as a potential physical threat (see, also, Lareau 2003):

And you find it helpful sometimes to use your status, what job you do. And people treat you differently. I don’t necessarily want to say I do x, y, and z, but I found that if you don’t sometimes say that, they treat you in a way, my own experience as a Black woman—oh, you’re a single parent—there is a category they read off as to who you are without really knowing anything about you. (Eleanor, social worker)

Derrick lives in a part of England with few visible minorities:

I believe there is fear. Six foot, Black guy with a baseball cap on ... I do believe that people have a stereotypical fear of what Black people are or what they could be ... That we are violent, we’re arrogant, we’re criminals, erm undereducated, erm generally not nice people to cross... Sometimes if someone at a checkout, if they don’t say hello first, I will say “hello, are you alright?” ... just to put them at ease that I am not going to hold a gun at them and tell them to empty the till. (Derrick, manager, voluntary sector organization)

Parents’ strategies here are suggested in the quotations above. The Black middle classes felt it necessary to have a number of public faces tailored to particular situations (see, for more details, Rollock et al. 2011b). In relation to interactions with schools in particular, parents spoke of drawing on their class resources—plentiful supplies of appropriate economic, social, and cultural capital—as a form of resistance to these stereotypes. They were highly attuned to the image they presented through their dress and their voice (accent and vocabulary in particular); they displayed their knowledge of the education system and spoke with confidence

and assurance within a “conversational” mode (Vincent and Martin 2002) designed to set up, as noted above, a dialogue of equals. The parent respondents are confident to engage with teachers, feel they have an entitlement to do so, and are confident to take any unresolved issues up the hierarchy of authority (Lareau 2003). Further examples reveal other ways in which parents use their economic, social, and cultural capitals to defend their children against the effects of being what one referred to as a “discredited minority” (Rachel, solicitor). Economic capital can offer access to high-status culture through enrichment activities such as music lessons (“[Music] can actually open up a lot of opportunities,” Malorie, LA officer); it can provide opportunities for supporting academic achievement through tutoring. Social capital can provide children with links to other Black professional and successful families (“[We have] a circle of Black friends who are all professional people, they are all highly educated, they are all aware of where they have come from, where they want to go,” Robert, academic). Cultural capital can encompass a wide range of attributes, attitudes, and even possessions (see, for a critique, Kingston 2001). As examples, parents referred to the importance of speaking “properly” and being articulate (Femi tells her daughter, “If you learn to speak properly now, you can choose when you use it and when you want something, you can use it to get what you want”), being polite, but assertive. Often, the deployment of these capitals was effective, as we have shown in several examples. However, Felicia’s experience of the racist abuse of her son shows that Black parents’ capital can be denied, rejected, and ignored. Perhaps because Felicia insisted on naming racism (indeed, she had little choice), the school stonewalled. Felicia is a lawyer, her husband a high-ranking civil servant, but the utilization of their capitals in addressing the threat to their son’s education is simply denied any legitimacy. We have already noted that some parent respondents avoided naming racism, addressing the problem using other terms, or having exhausted “voice” turned to “exit,” and took the child out of school.

### *Teen Resistance and Peer Group Effect*

In some cases, those parent respondents who had teenagers found that their children resisted their parents’ efforts to guide them through schooling. “Oh my children didn’t want me to go anywhere. ‘No please don’t do anything. Leave it.’ ... OK that’s fine with me” (Anthea, Local Authority education manager). Catherine is less sanguine. About her son, whom she considers to be underperforming, she says,

I am held at bay.... Being a parent who comes from a professional background and being Black, I had hopes that I would be able to use that to [son’s] advantage in terms of work experience, in being able to support him with his homework ... provide an environment where he would be able to excel and that’s been resisted so much. So in terms of [son’s] education, I may as well be whatever, not a professional parent. (Catherine, head teacher)

This induces considerable frustration, because she considers her son to be “below the radar” at school. Illustrating the school’s low expectations, she notes “Because

he's [seen by his teachers as] a nice boy and not kicking off, he's almost being allowed to underperform." One of Catherine's strategies here is to seek to control her son's out-of-school activities and insist on his enrolment in a number of musical and sporting activities. Use of extracurricular activities designed to cultivate and develop talents and skills in a concerted manner was common across the sample. This is an approach to parenting that Annette Lareau (2003) has called "concerted cultivation." Lareau argues that Black and White middle-class parents in the USA place equal importance on such activities for creating high-status cultural knowledge, skill in a range of areas, and a number of interpersonal and personal attributes (the ability to work with others, focus, self-discipline, etc.). However, in addition to these reasons, some parents in our sample also used out-of-school activities—such as membership of organizations like Junior Windsor Fellowship, 100 Black Men, or, to a lesser extent, attendance at supplementary schools, to develop their child's sense of self-esteem and pride as a Black young person, to enhance their knowledge of Black histories and cultures, and give them opportunities to be with other aspirational Black students and successful adults.

Parents in the study also feared the negative influences of peers who may come from families who did not share the emphasis they placed on education or did not oversee their children's activities to any great extent. As a result, they carefully considered the social mix when choosing a school. For the majority of respondents, a "good" social mix at school signals an ethnically diverse intake. Some parents prioritized academic attainment, and for those who chose private schools, this generally meant sending their children to schools that were less mixed on ethnic and social dimensions. However, others prioritized a diverse pupil intake, although the preferred diversity was usually one of ethnicity rather than social class (see, for more details, Ball et al. 2011):

So, yeah we chose that school on the basis of the location. The kind of feel of the place as I say, you know, what the tutors were like, and what the other kids seemed like, they had kids guiding us around this school, the kind of look of the place as in the space and layout, all of these things I took into consideration and yeah, very much a mix 'cos some of the other schools we went to ... were quite heavily Asian, and I didn't, you know, I didn't want that but neither did I want it to be heavily White, I wanted it mixed. I wanted my dream [laughs] a melting pot school. (Amanda, Senior Librarian)

Ethnic diversity in pupil intake meant, parents felt, that the likelihood of racism was minimized, and students learnt to develop tolerance and other valuable skills and dispositions for coping with ethnic "others." As far as schooling is concerned, such "good" mixes are far easier to find in London than elsewhere in the UK.

Parents were attuned to their children's friendships but were also aware of the limits of control. Nonetheless, efforts are made to ensure that children choose the "right" friends—those who are like them in terms of values, aspirations, demeanour, speech, and language. White middle-class parents evinced the same concerns but inflected differently in terms of the relations between ethnicity and class (Ball et al. 2004). A few parents were ambivalent about the ethnic mixing of their children, wanting them to have at least some Black friends, and this led to discussions within some families about the importance of a positive Black identity.

## Concluding Thoughts

The respondents in our project work to defend their children and themselves from overt racism, stereotyping, and seemingly entrenched low expectations, alongside investing time and energy in the development of their children as successful learners. In order to resist misrepresentations of themselves and their children based on damaging, negative, and stereotypical perceptions of Black working class behaviour and attitudes, parents deployed a range of strategies, and these strategies draw on a range of social, cultural, and economic resources commonly associated with the middle classes. Parents seek to organize their child's educational experiences, and to some extent their social experiences, both in and outside school: inside, in order that their concerns and arguments be heard by school managers; and outside, in order that their children receive a range of experiences designed to develop their resources of cultural and social capital in directions deemed by their parents to be appropriate (see Vincent et al. 2012). We conclude, therefore, that for those Black middle-class parents to whom we spoke, their engagement with the school system, their orientation towards it, lies on radically different ground to that of White middle-class parents, although several of their strategies designed to help navigate their children successfully through schooling appear similar.

Both positive and negative readings are possible here. Through their actions, their strategizing, their labour, there is the potential for parents' "strategies of action" (Moore 2008) to lead to the "remaking of racial meaning in day to day life" (Craig 2002, p. 9, cited in Moore 2008, p. 499), because they present assertive, knowledgeable, and engaged parental identities to counter the dominant White stereotypes of Black parents as lacking in these attributes. However, the degree and extent of the labour required by Black parents in their interactions with schools speaks to the continuing significance of race and racism, despite the advantages of their class position, in shaping their and their children's experiences as they strive to ensure educational success. We conclude that social class resources, carefully deployed, help to mediate racism *to some extent* for the respondent parents and their children. However, our data reveal the extent to which racial inequalities still mark and shape the lives of these families.

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# Significance of Family and School, Educational Standards, and Social Reproduction in Education

Jutta Ecarius

Family and public education are two institutions in which children are schooled, educated, and socialized. As the primary and secondary agents of socialization, they are important places of awakening, orientation, and self-discovery for children. Both institutions complement one another, but the fit between the two is problematic due to entirely different social typifications. Although Bourdieu's theoretical considerations provide many impetuses for the theoretical discussion of issues relating to social reproduction in the family and schools, in my chapter, the educational significance of family will be explored from a pedagogical standpoint, and the discussion will focus on educational standards in schools.

The attempt to formulate a basic theoretical conception of the social reproductive function of family and school draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus. This concept (cf. Bourdieu 1992a) defines the principle of generative cognition as the conversion of structure into practice and conversely practice into structure. The habitus of a person encompasses—besides objective structures—thought, perception and action patterns, corporeality, tastes, and aesthetic attitudes. The habitus does not just incorporate Aristotle's concept of the body as a permanent and stable entity (*hexis*) with a disposition of personal characteristics along with Max Weber's (1988) ethos as referred to in his studies of Protestantism as a system of aspirations, expectations, and hopes. It also unites Marcel Mauss' (1990) differentiation of bodily techniques as an assembly of physical dispositions; Panofsky's (1951) understanding, drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas, of habitus as the mental habit in all expressions of life (e.g., in the parallelism of Gothic architecture and scholasticism); and finally Alfred Schütz's (1991) definition as everyday knowledge comprising a matrix of evidence and a structure with which everyday experiences and cultural horizons of perceptions, opinions, and actions are established intersubjectively and culturally.

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The habitus concept of Bourdieu (1992a, b) has four dimensions: moral (ethos), corporeal (*hexis*), cognitive (*eidos*), and aesthetic (cf. Ecarius 1996; Kalthoff 2004). A family habitus possesses these four dimensions just as a school education habitus in its own way reproduces and modifies these dimensions. The dimensions of social reproduction, patterns of family transmission in a private space of possibilities, and reproduction strategies of the education system will be presented in the following elaboration in a theoretical context from the perspective of the family.

## Family as a Place of Education

The family can be understood as a place in which the chances of attaining social status originate. Following Bourdieu, it can be said that everyday interaction within the family creates a habitus that, in turn, serves as the basis for the production of other practices in a process that is not autonomous and open but conforms to the basic patterns of a milieu- and family-specific habitus.

Thus, the habitus as “the action-enabling system of limitations” (Bauer 2002, p. 136, translated) structures and regulates everyday habits and routines as well as common perceptions and thinking in the family. The habitus can be concretized through distinction-creating forms of capital (social, economic, and cultural), with cultural capital that is effectively embodied, objectified, and institutionalized belonging to a person’s resources. The forms of capital are acquired and passed on from generation to generation in the family. In this respect, the family can also be seen as the chief perpetrator of reproduction strategies. Families use culture as the *medium* for personal and familial reproduction (Zinnecker 1994, p. 42). The dynamics arising from this lead to increasing concurrence and produce new patterns of social reproduction—namely, securing tradition while, at the same time, continuously creating something new.

The family passes on first and foremost its own family culture. This process can develop its own structural dynamics of familial-cultural self-reproduction that can distance or even decouple themselves from the cultural transfer of society as a whole. The education system with its comprehensive “scholarizing” is the family’s principal competitor in this process. Systematic transmission of cultural knowledge is currently excluded from the area of responsibility of parents (Stecher and Zinnecker 2007, pp. 399–401). Therefore, the fit between both places of learning ultimately decides whether the cultural transfer relationships in the family are conducive or not to status maintenance or improvement.

Transfer of familial-cultural knowledge is subject to time as well and therefore not only a matter of *what* is imparted but also of *how* cultural transmission takes place. The question of how familial transmission takes place is closely related to the question of the “strategies” of the habitus that regulates the different ways of familial transmission and, in turn, is produced by them. Habitus strategies work, according to Bourdieu, below the level of consciousness and are therefore also

especially effective because they belong to those strategies that “are produced without calculation” (Bourdieu 1993, p. 116, translated).

Bourdieu’s strategy concept (1993) characterizes the skillful handling of the immanent logic of a game and practical mastery of the logic of things. Bourdieu calls this a “feel for the game” or a practical sense. Something acquired in a game functions largely below the level of direct consciousness and reflective thought: “Strategy is the product of practical sense as a ‘sense of the game’... [that] is acquired in earliest childhood through participation in social activities, particularly... in children’s games” (Bourdieu 1992b, p. 83, translated). Habitus strategies are also education strategies. They usually are produced through practical, body-sensitive, mimetic action in interaction with others in everyday cultural practice. Habitus development is thus the bundling of complex knowledge gained from experience and the networking of dispositions.

Therefore, how—it may be asked—is habitus produced as the (familial) “present of the past that produced it” (Bourdieu 1992b, p. 105, translated)? From the moment of birth into a family, the tiny human begins to develop a habitus and assimilates not only the familial character but also influences from its social space. Intergenerational conflicts arise, according to Bourdieu, primarily when different forms of habitus resulting from different experiences collide. This reasoning led to the notion of recognition, which can explain other aspects of *how* the presumed reproduction of social inequality through education takes place; it can be applied both to the family microcosm and to the levels of society as a whole. Mutual recognition can be manifested as mutual esteem, which promotes emulation (readiness) or social inclusion processes, and as appropriate action. Conversely, misrecognition can lead to conflicts and social exclusion (Honneth 2003).

## Family Habitus, School, and Educational Standards

Thus, the family is a place of education that opens up a possibility space for younger generations. In this context, education is acquired involvement with the world and self-fulfillment of the individual (cf. Büchner and Brake 2006, p. 23). At the same time, education is coupled to a formal concept of education associated with diplomas and social prestige. According to Bourdieu, families should be analyzed at the junction of education level, family habitus, and social milieu (cf. Bourdieu 1992b). A social milieu (cf. Hradil 2004) is a group of people with a similar mentality and similar objective environment (region, neighborhood, occupation) who agree on the principles of lifestyle and establishing relationships. Adults belonging to the same social milieu “raise... their children similarly” (Hradil 2004, p. 278, translated). In terms of educational theory, a family’s children are considered part of the adult social milieu of the parents. Derived also from this is the notion of a family habitus in which the family as the place of education also always represents the principles of the lifestyle of its social milieu. At the same time, every family must entrust its

children to the school system; it is required by law to let the younger generation be taught in school.

School as the central location of institutionalized cultural capital (cf. Bourdieu 1983) has power through the recognized credentials it awards, and it organizes itself autonomously: Specialized transmitters are trained in university institutions and are officially authorized to function as knowledge transmitters and legitimate the institution through their pedagogical work (cf. Bourdieu 2001). Moreover, the school institution develops tools and didactic media that it uses to routinize its work (cf. Helsper 2006). It is given the function in society of using pedagogical-professional forms of teaching and learning to revise and systematize those patterns (family habitus) involving primarily cultural capital practiced by children in their families (cf. Kalthoff 2004) in such a way that the child can attain educational credentials. School education and familial education/socialization produce embodied thought, action, and perception patterns in the subject as well as a correspondingly habitualized body: Both institutions work on the child's and adolescent's body, his or her thinking, actions, and perception.

Even though schools claim to transmit competencies regardless of social class,<sup>1</sup> they perpetuate nonetheless the cultural patterns of the elite social milieu (cf. Bellenberg 1999). As Bourdieu (2001) points out:

For the children of the wealthy classes, school is part of the order of things, their order. This does not apply in the same way to children from the lower classes that have objectively few chances for successful studies. The “equality of chances” is decided, based on the distribution of university degrees, by social origin. This distribution blatantly shows that the chance of a child's success in school is more directly a function of his or her social class than of his or her individual talents. (p. 20, translated)

The family habitus that a child acquires has a milieu-specific logic of reproduction that influences the child's performance. The “equality of chances” proves to be an illusion of equal opportunity, because the child's prerequisites for school achievement are predetermined by the family habitus. The results of the PISA studies (cf. Baumert et al. 2003) show that the influence of parents and their educational aspirations plays a major role in a child's success in school (cf. Ditton 2004).

Since the PISA studies, a debate has evolved over how cultural techniques can be defined. This discussion is extremely interesting, particularly because it can be used to demonstrate how educational standards are defined and human abilities taken into account. Under discussion are basic competencies (cf. Klieme et al. 2007) that have much in common with Bourdieu's habitus concept. The concepts encompass bodily

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<sup>1</sup>The expansion of education has not produced the hoped for reduction of social inequalities. Instead, the educational system has experienced a horizontal expansion in addition to its classical vertical stratification since the 1960s. As a result, school credentials are today the prerequisite for all occupations (cf. Becker 2006), without these credentials—with the exception of during a short period in the 1970s—contributing decisively to social mobility. At the same time, newer social milieus have appeared as the evolution of older traditional milieus that arose from traditional “family trees” (Vester 2004, p. 37). The horizontal shift in position of social milieus corresponds to new, milieu-specific education strategies.

(*hexis*), moral (*ethos*), cognitive (*eidos*), and aesthetic dimensions. Grundmann, Bittlingmayer, Dravenau, and Groh-Samberg (2004) have criticized these discussions for having created a competence biography that serves as a basis for the school education concept. This competence biography—which fulfills the educational standards, pursues learning of learning, and can be translated into academic achievements—incorporates, in my opinion, a strong reproductive bias of social inequality, because the standards of the educated classes are implemented in it and reformulated objectively as achievement criteria. The requirement of a comprehensive education, an analysis of self- and world-relations, is theoretically maintained in a first step but soon transitions into concrete achievement that can be measured empirically and compared statistically. This produces a new type of relationship between the school habitus<sup>2</sup> and the family habitus of the elite social milieu. The purportedly class-neutral content of achievement catalogs turns out to increase social inequality, because, paradoxically, only the achievements of students are what count, and the relation to the social milieu is not discussed despite the fact that the relation of performance to the family habitus is one of the central findings of the PISA studies.<sup>3</sup>

In the debate about educational standards, Klieme et al. (2007) have formulated:

Basic skills... refer to the ability to participate in society in a self-determined manner, to see and make use of the importance of each of the different dimensions of action—moral, cognitive, social, and individual—as well as to be able to align one’s own actions with a general law. In terms of biography, it is also assumed that all adolescents will become able to deal with new challenges and an uncertain future and alternative options in the form of one’s own life in the mode of learning. “Learning of learning” is the basic, life-long essential competence that needs to be generalized in school work in modern open societies. (p. 66, translated)

According to Weinert (2001), competencies are learnable, cognitive skills that are associated with motivational, volitional, and social skills and serve as problem-solving strategies. Competencies are rooted in cultural traditions of coping with the practical demands of life and participation of children and youths in social, global life (cf. Swanson and Stevenson 2002). They promote lifelong cultivation based on an expanding general education that turns into processes of self-learning (cf. Maag Merki 2004). All students should acquire “universal” competencies. There are four different modes of life experience (moral, cognitive, social, and individual) that are

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<sup>2</sup>Below, reference will be made to a school habitus or education habitus based on the habitus concept of Bourdieu (1992b) as the (structured and structuring) principle producing thoughts, actions, and perceptions in the school space. It should be understood as the transmitter of individual actions in the context of school education and social conditions.

<sup>3</sup>A shortening of college preparatory school education in Germany, simultaneous expansion of subject material, and extension of core qualifications to include the ability to resolve social conflicts, tolerance, or a learning of learning without a corresponding increase in material resources of the education system reduce the chances of children from families of educationally disadvantaged social milieus.

defined as competencies and incorporated in a school curriculum. According to Klieme et al. (2007), historical, mathematical, linguistic, and aesthetic-expressive knowledge and content should be denoted as the basis for defining the educational standards that are to be organized in a school curriculum (cf. Baumert 2003).

The debate about educational standards<sup>4</sup> will lead to a reformulation of the desired education habitus. The criteria including thinking, action, and perception along the four modes of life experience in global societies based on a lifetime of learning of learning cumulate in an ideal competence biography. Familial education and socialization, the social environment, and biographical experience are associated with a middle-class conception of the human being as a reflexive aesthetic, learning, interculturally tolerant, and biographically stabile subject. This conception is no longer, however, seen as the target vision of a lifelong development process in which school education plays a certain role. Instead, the school education habitus claims for itself a monopoly on comprehensive, formal, material, and even informal education. This creates a comprehensive concept of the human being that is reformulated in a school habitus and mutates as the generally accepted education habitus into the educational standard for schools, classes, and the achievements attained by the individual student. The school education habitus conceals a close relationship to the legitimate cultural goods of families of the dominant social milieus that students ultimately already need to bring with them when they start school. Excluded are the competencies of families that belong to the other social milieus. Educationally disadvantaged milieus have their own language codes; a social-specific ethos; their own body *hexis*; and particular mental habits, expectations, and hopes. In Bourdieu's words, this is a special practical sense that distinguishes their education habitus, shows its own social logics, and consequently has other content. "It is a practical sense for reliably recognizing, communicating, and dealing with social relationships, corporeality, emotional states, and unforeseen situations" (Vester 2004, p. 50, translated; similarly, Grundmann et al. 2004).

In this debate, there are two lines of argument: On the one hand, a middle-class education canon is propagated that is supplemented by such things as learning of learning and informal learning. On the other hand, ostensible neutrality is produced through the formulation of achievement catalogs with which the connection to the middle-class canon is neutralized. This, however, is nothing else but a cover-up tactic and thus stabilizes the structure of inequality in the school education habitus, because, although the middle-class canon is not immediately discernible and perhaps even invisible, it nonetheless significantly structures the school education habitus.

The formal equality that educational standards claim to have with their catalog of achievements irrespective of familial culture and wealth (cf. Ditton 2004) is supported by an ideology of giftedness. According to Bourdieu, all families draw on the

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<sup>4</sup>There is still no universal educational standard in Germany: Klieme et al. (2007) have called for a minimum educational standard, but different federal ministries favor concepts that should broadly specify educational standards. This discussion usually focuses on definition of the content that should be transmitted in schools, how education can be sustained, and what the assessment criteria are.

ideology of the gifted individual as the underlying reason for success in school. The ideology of giftedness conceals the proximity of the education habitus to the upper social milieus and makes it possible to maintain the apparent neutrality of the content of education. By assuming the individual abilities of the child, the child's talents, to be a neutral element, school converts according to Bourdieu (2001)

actual equalities into legitimate inequalities, economic and social differences into a qualitative difference, and it legitimates the transfer of cultural inheritance. By this it serves a mystifying function. The ideology of giftedness, the basic precondition for the school system and society, not only offers the elite the possibility of seeing its existence justified but also helps to make it seem to members of the disadvantaged classes that the fate given to them by society is inescapable. (p. 46, translated)

With the ideology of giftedness, values such as diligence and effort, seriousness and hard work, striving to be good, and learning for hours are devalued. The ideology of giftedness emphasizes virtuosity, knowledge, superior competence, and linguistic elegance, which are attributed to the individual subject as individual talents. Achievements therefore merge with behavior and attitudes, resulting in the competence biography. The model associated with this of the independent student who moves confidently ("competent") in a space with learning opportunities to be acquired independently puts those students at a disadvantage who cannot draw on their family habitus to develop this competence.

According to Bourdieu, school establishes an ideology of individual scholastic well-being, because abilities are assessed by the student's achievements. But schools are not alone in holding this ideology; parents also orient themselves toward the ideology of giftedness and see in scholastic achievement primarily the talents of their children. In modern societies, achievement of the individual is the central mode of social esteem (cf. Honneth 2003). Hidden in individualized achievement—as the universalized dimension—are, however, the privileged forms of life and culture of the dominant social milieus (cf. Helsper 2006). Every family gives "its children more indirectly than directly a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos, a system of implicit and deeply internalized values that also decisively influence their attitude towards cultural capital and the school institution" (Bourdieu 2001, p. 26, translated).

In Bourdieu's analysis, the result of this normative scale of individual competence is that in the case of poor achievement, a family in the lower social milieus tends to emphasize the lack of ability of its child and relate this to the objective chances of the family habitus (cf. Schümer 2004). Consequently, the parent's educational aspirations for the child sink, because the family habitus is not considered able to keep up. Families from lower social milieus can be more easily convinced of the apparent inability of the child. In this respect, schools do their part to convince them of their distance from the education habitus: The inability to keep up is interpreted as the child's lack of talent.

A child's success in converting the cultural practices of the family habitus into scholastic achievements is greater the more these practices conform to the educational standard of the school (cf. Baumert et al. 2003). An elaborate language code, aesthetic interests (theater, music), cognitive skills, and a distinctive bodily *hexis* in

the family habitus are the means of fulfilling the educational aspirations of the younger generation. In this respect, it is also fitting that families from upper social milieus also articulate a distance from school (cf. Helsper 2006, p. 168). In the milieus of the powerful and wealthy, the family habitus produces (cf. Vester 2004) an exclusive distinction, status protection, and closure—also through additional out-of-school educational efforts. The milieu of the educated elite likewise orients itself toward the meritocratic achievement principle, because its members are dedicated to the ethos of high cultural self-fulfillment. These parents are not under any pressure to orient themselves toward the school habitus, because they help define it—if not even dictate to schools the direction of future educational content.

Children from privileged milieus have their environment to thank for not only the habits and trained behavior that are directly useful for school tasks but also the not even most important advantage of direct parental support. They inherit also knowledge and skills, aptitudes and “good taste,” which give a higher return on investment at school than the value of these imponderables of attitude entered in the talent account. (Bourdieu 2001, pp. 29–30, translated)

The family conveys here a cultural inheritance and pure education that is given to the youngest generation without any methodical effort or manifest pressure as transmission of the identical or equivalent. This can transition smoothly to the school habitus and help develop individual abilities that correspond to the meritocratic achievement principle. These students develop a “student habitus” that corresponds to the school habitus (cf. Helsper 2006; Kramer 2002). The competencies learned with the greatest of ease in the possibility space of the family habitus guarantee success in school as a “gifted” individual.

The taste of necessity that, according to Bourdieu, families from the lower social milieus follow, is inherent in their distance to the education habitus of school. According to Vester (2004), the habitus of necessity can be found in the traditionless, nonconformist, resigned, status-oriented, working class milieus as well as in the hedonist milieu. Alienation is typical of the taste of necessity from two perspectives: It embodies “that’s nothing for us” on the one hand and “we lack the means for it” on the other (Bourdieu 2001, p. 32, translated). It is a sense of constraint in two ways: It is self-elimination from higher institutions of education and also the explicitly emphasized distance, the lack of means. For educationally disadvantaged parents, advancement of their children through education seems rather unlikely, making it appear objectively reasonable for them not to get involved with the school habitus and also not to encourage their children to do so.

The behavior of these parents orients itself according to Bourdieu toward the objective chances that their children will attain a higher social standing through school, which—as the results of the PISA studies have shown—have stagnated since reform of the education system. The chances for immigrant children are also poor. The fact that learning potential is attributed to the individual student and not to his or her social preconditions and that the performance of each student is measured according to a “neutral” standard shows these students and their parents very clearly what little chance of success they have in the school system. The distance of the lower social classes from the education system results in an attitude of

alienation, because they realize that their family habitus—their thinking, perception, and actions—is not compatible with school curriculum content. Instead of discrediting the education system, the difference leads to an alienation from education (cf. Grundmann et al. 2004). The school system with its performance criteria remains legitimated without being challenged.

The neutrality claim of the education system is reinforced by the fact that some few children from educationally disadvantaged social milieus do manage to escape their collective fate, but here, too, the individual performance of the child is evaluated without regard to the family habitus. This gives selection in school the appearance of legitimation, and the myth of the “family-neutral” school receives credibility, because those excluded from it also believe in the ideology of giftedness and have the attitude that academic success is primarily produced by talent and individual achievement.

The family habitus of the middle class sees in the school education habitus a chance to close the gap in culturally legitimate educational capital through educational zeal and thus to attain a higher social standing. The cultural distance from the school education canon is compensated for, according to Bourdieu, by a zealous appropriation effort, making acquiring an education and achievement important values in the family; they are part of the family habitus. Vester (2004, p. 39) speaks of the habitus of strivers. The families of the leftist and lower middle class adhere to an ethics of ascetic achievement and education with the promise of gaining autonomy through the acquisition of academic credentials as well as a traditional orientation toward education.

Because school concentrates on transmission of the contents of the curriculum, it neglects to convey those cultural attitudes that are passed on naturally to children in the elite social classes through the family habitus. The contents of the curriculum are interpreted as neutral factual subjects that are to be incorporated by all students in the same way. However, schools may not assume that the reception by students can be standardized and that the contents of the curriculum lead to the same results in all learners. “Pedagogic communication is directly [dependent on] the culture that the recipient in this case owes to his or her familial milieu, the owner and transmitter of a culture... that is more or less closely allied in its content and implicit values with the academic culture transmitted by the school and the language and culture patterns of the school’s transmission function” (Bourdieu 2001, p. 50, translated).

## Concluding Thoughts

The school education habitus and family habitus also point to the future, to the objective chances that can be achieved—or not—through the subjective action of the child. The future, according to Bourdieu, is coupled with the hope or hopelessness by which subjective expectations and subjective actions are guided. It is the meshing of internalization of the objective future of a family: the potential chances



for the youngest generation or the potential disadvantages of failing in the education system. The likelihood of successfully finishing school goes hand in hand with a specific family habitus, transmitted familial experiences, and the possibilities of closing the gap to the official educational capital. If the chances of participating successfully in school education in the future are low, then the behavior of a family toward it, according to Bourdieu, will be oriented toward the present. Thus, there is an implicit uncertainty as to how successful the efforts of children will be and an implicit knowledge in families as to the level of education that can be attained. Herein lies, at the same time, the restraint or openness toward school that is the reason for the child's educational aspiration and learning motivation. These strategies are transmitted in the family habitus and strengthened or even confirmed by the school education habitus. The competencies acquired in the family habitus are cast via the school and awarding of educational credentials into a social structure with which social inequalities manifest themselves. Although family research that makes investigation of the structures and mechanisms of social inequality in its manifold facets its task can look back on many key theoretical and empirical studies, many questions still remain unanswered. My thoughts drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's work can help provide a more precise theoretical focus for finding answers to these questions.

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# Studying at Home: With Whom and in Which Way? Homework Practices and Conflicts in the Family

Elke Wild and Sittipan Yotyodying

In recent years, international comparative studies have provided strong evidence for the powerful influence of students' socioeconomic background on their educational success. Because the slope of the socioeconomic gradient is particularly steep in Germany, public sensitivity and scientific interest in socialization processes within the family has dramatically increased in this country.

In this context, findings on family involvement in education suggest that children may benefit from their parent's engagement in schooling (Cooper et al. 2006). However, research analyzing the effectiveness of programs to improve parental involvement or dealing with the impact of the school-related activities of parents on different outcomes generally reveal quite inconsistent results (Mattingly et al. 2002; Patall et al. 2008). This somewhat disappointing conclusion may be due to the conceptual and methodological problems inherent in most of the studies at hand (Wild and Lorenz 2010).

Present theoretical contributions underline that family involvement is a complex, multifaceted construct that subsumes a wide array of parental activities (which are reflected in, for example, the National Standards for Family–School Partnerships; <http://www.pta.org/1216.htm>) such as participating in school decision making (e.g., participating in school committees), contributing to school activities (e.g., excursions, festivities), communicating with the school (e.g., volunteering at school, exchanging information with teachers), as well as forms of involvement in children's educational experiences at home (e.g., supervision and

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monitoring, daily conversations about school). Consequently, *multidimensional conceptualizations of parent involvement* (e.g., Cooper et al. 2000; Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994) have been developed that provide theoretically derived dimensions of school engagement.

Unfortunately, much of the empirical research on parent involvement does not apply these conceptualizations. Instead, most studies have either investigated the “overall” impact of family involvement on children’s learning outcomes (often by using solitary items from surveys to assess parent involvement) or focused on isolated parent involvement behaviors. Moreover, much of the literature concerning the effects of homework has devoted attention almost exclusively to school performance (in terms of grades) as an outcome measure (Cooper et al. 2006). Therefore, very little is known about the impact of parental school engagement on learning outcomes beyond children’s achievement.

Recent reviews (e.g., Sacher 2008) suggest that *school-based activities* (including home–school conferencing as well as parental contributions to school activities and school decision making) may be important for children’s psychosocial development (e.g., the degree of conduct problems), but that they do not (strongly) predict their academic development. In contrast, *home-based family involvement* (or school-based home instruction) influences students’ learning outcomes as measured in terms of grades, learning motivation, attention, task persistence, self-concept, as well as domain-specific and self-regulatory skills.

Therefore, our work focuses on school-based home instruction and further differentiates between *quantitative and qualitative aspects*. With respect to the first, we are interested in variations in (a) the frequency of school-based home instruction, (b) the amount of time that parents invest, and (c) the degree to which families rely on human resources within the family (e.g., siblings, grandparents) and outside the family (e.g., teachers, commercial tutoring).

With respect to the *quality* of children’s educational experiences at home (i.e., home-based family involvement), we developed a four-dimensional conceptualization of parental help (see Lorenz and Wild 2007). This theoretical framework is strongly inspired by self-determination theory (SDT; see Deci and Ryan 2000), which, in essence, proposes that humans are intrinsically motivated to pursue activities that are interesting, optimally challenging, and spontaneously satisfying. From this perspective, an individual’s development will not be distorted as long as the social context (i.e., socializing agents) allows the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: the needs for autonomy, competence, and social relatedness. To the degree that these basic needs are satisfied, individuals may internalize extrinsically motivated behaviors (e.g., uninteresting but socially prescribed activities) into personally important behaviors.

By applying this approach to the conceptualization of home-based family involvement, we differentiate between four dimensions of parental help:

- The first dimension, labeled *autonomy-supportive help*, can be characterized by the imperative “parental assistance as much as necessary, but as little as possible.” This rule of thumb implies that parents should adjust the amount and kind of their assistance to the capabilities of their individual child in order to help him or her to increasingly assume personal responsibility for the learning process.

- The second dimension, *structure*, refers to the extent to which parents indirectly support their children's self-regulated learning by creating learning situations that do not overburden the child's capacities but allow him or her to behave in an autonomous way. Orientation is given by setting clear expectations, standards, and values and by implementing rituals to handle, for example, homework situations.
- The third dimension, *responsiveness*, reflects the degree to which parents express their interest in the child's school experiences and help him or her to cope with failures.

Up to this point, we assume that students will be more motivated to learn, to improve their learning strategies, and to acquire a deeper understanding the more their parents implement these principles, that is, the more they are likely to provide an autonomy-supportive, responsive, and structured learning climate at home.

- In contrast, the fourth dimension, *control*, is considered to be a dysfunctional type of parental help because of its negative effects on need satisfaction. Parental control includes the exertion of excessive pressure on children to complete assignments as well as parental use of extrinsic performance-contingent rewards. Taking the continuing controversy concerning reward effects on intrinsic motivation into account (e.g., Deci et al. 1999), we argue that achievement-oriented pressure must not undermine intrinsic motivation but is insofar suboptimal because parental reliance on extrinsic rewards may increase students' performance (-avoidance) orientation and not foster the internalization of achievement-related values, standards, and rules.

In light of these conceptual clarifications, we now turn to the presentation of selected results that provide an insight into homework practice in German families. At first, we focus on quantitative variations in school-based home instruction: Age-related differences will be reported, and results for different domains, school types, and social status groups will be contrasted. Our second part focuses on how the amount and type of parental help are linked to a range of learning outcomes. Furthermore, we shall present a parent training designed to reduce homework conflicts and to improve the quality of parental help. The final part addresses theoretical considerations and preliminary findings on the determinants of parental school engagement.

## **Homework Practice in Germany: Differences Depending on Age, Subject Domain, and Social Background**

Present findings on the determinants and consequences of parent involvement stem almost exclusively from empirical studies conducted in foreign countries and may not be applicable to the situation in Germany for several reasons:

- The German educational system differs in essential aspects from most other systems (e.g., explicit and early tracking; most students attend a half-day school and have to do homework at home).

- In contrast to other countries, teacher training in Germany does not entail any profound preparation for creating productive partnerships with families.
- Correspondingly, the level of parent–teacher cooperation in Germany is still low and intermittent; the relationship between parents and teachers is tense (Sacher 2008).
- In Germany, the proportion of full-time female employees with school-age children is lower than in most other western industrialized nations. International comparative studies have suggested that this phenomenon may be attributed to societal norms and insufficient support services for working mothers (e.g., Badinter 2010).

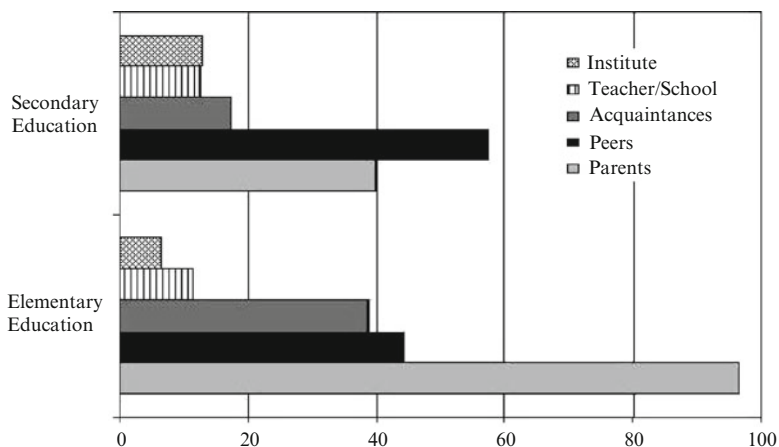
In view of these obstacles, we started our research program by investigating whether the prevailing practice of family involvement in Germany follows the same pattern identified in previous studies. Since age-related differences in parental involvement have been studied most, we first examined whether the frequency of parental instruction declines as children grow older and whether decreases depend on the school track students attend. To obtain a deeper insight into the reasons for the assumed diminishing engagement, we further inspected students' learning behaviors, the provision of support by other persons (besides parents), as well as differences in the quality of parental support.

To obtain some information on age-related changes in the amount of parental involvement, we conducted a cross-sectional study of homework practices in the subject of German studies with approximately 1,000 students attending 4th, 6th, and 10th grades<sup>1</sup> (see, for greater detail, Gerber and Wild 2009). Our analyses revealed that in elementary school, *parents* play a primary and almost exclusive role in homework assistance (see Fig. 1). Accordingly, only a minority of young children cannot ask for their parents' help, and this is essentially true for secondary students, too. As expected, *peers* (siblings, classmates) become an increasingly important source of homework assistance in secondary school. But even in the 10th grade, when peers represent the most preferred partners, parents are still reported to be the second most important source of homework assistance.

Interestingly, less than 20% of students rely on the help of relatives (e.g., grandparents), family acquaintances, or professionals (teacher, educational staff in schools) or obtain support from paid persons (private tutoring, extra tutoring in commercial facilities). Nevertheless, the percentage of 6th and 10th graders receiving extra tutorial support is significantly higher than the proportion of 4th graders.

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<sup>1</sup>At the end of elementary school (the 4th grade), German students are assigned to different school tracks in order to continue their secondary education. Most students attending the highest track run through the *Sekundarstufe I* (5th to 10th grade) as well as the *Sekundarstufe II* (11th to 12th or 13th grade). Having completed their final secondary-school examinations (*Abitur*), they may apply for courses leading to a bachelor and/or master degree. In contrast, the majority of students attending the middle track (*Realschule*) or the lowest track (*Hauptschule*) start their vocational trainings at the end of the 9th or 10th grade.



**Fig. 1** Age-related differences in sources of homework assistance (Adapted from Gerber and Wild 2009)

Further studies are needed to explore whether this phenomenon may be attributed to increasing performance requirements in secondary education.

Although these results indicate a somewhat sustained significance of school-based home instruction, this notion may be questioned because of methodological restrictions (cross-sectional database) and conceptual constraints (e.g., investigating homework practice in a single domain). Our longitudinal studies addressing homework practice in chemistry and mathematics at different grades, however, dispel these objections (Exeler and Wild 2003; Wild et al. 2006). Taken together, these findings provide strong evidence for the assumption that the majority of German students—even in secondary school—rely on their parent’s assistance when learning at home. However, the frequency of parental assistance varies across grade levels rather than across different subjects (minor vs. major subject; mathematics vs. science vs. German studies), and this observation raises the question why parents’ involvement decreases as students grow older.

In light of recent findings on the determinants of student’s self-regulated learning (e.g., Dettmers et al. 2009; Trautwein et al. 2006), this phenomenon might simply reflect changes in the density of homework assignments and students’ homework practices. Our analyses support this idea insofar as they suggest age-related differences in learning behavior. Although the time students spend on completing their homework does not vary across grade levels and school types, we found that the percentage of “seasonal learners” (Mischo 2006)—that is, students who do not learn continuously—increases with higher grade levels. In addition, analyses revealed that older students are more likely to restrict their time investment in out-of-school learning to short-term preparations for examinations.

Interestingly, these changes in students’ behavioral patterns are associated with changes in the occasions for and kinds of parental help: the more learning processes

at home are oriented toward performance (vs. learning) goals, the more they are negatively evaluated by students. In fact, older students are more likely to experience their parent's help as controlling, to evaluate homework situations as less enjoyable and parental help as less desirable, and to show a reduced tendency to ask for parental help.

Below, we shall take up this overall finding again; in advance, however, we want to inspect differential developmental trajectories in homework behavior in more detail. Our previous considerations abstracted from differences in subpopulations, although results from international comparative studies indicate that the socioeconomically related inequality in academic competencies is higher in Germany than in most other OECD countries. Therefore, our further analyses aimed to explore in more depth the influences of social background on homework assistance. We focus on secondary school students because previous results suggest that children from higher socioeconomic groups are particularly favored in secondary education—not least because the type of secondary school attended is strongly related to social class (Baumert and Schümer 2001).

Comparative analyses between students visiting the lowest track (*Hauptschule*) and the highest track of the German school system (*Gymnasium*) revealed that utilization of peer support is largely independent from school type. In contrast, the engagement of parents differs significantly: The 6th graders attending the highest track obtain more parental support than their counterparts on the lowest track. In the 10th grade, this difference was less pronounced than in the 6th grade because of the generally reduced amount of parental support.

At first sight, our findings correspond to the complaints of many teachers over an increasing drop in parental engagement in general and in the involvement of socially disadvantaged parents in particular. Yet both phenomena have to be interpreted with caution for two reasons: First, it has to be taken into account that older students should have higher self-regulation competencies and therefore may need less support or profit more from another kind of instruction. Second, the benefit of out-of-school assistance may depend on task difficulty and the expertise of family members. From this perspective, an increasing parental withdrawal from school concerns may be appropriate in most families because older students become competent self-regulated learners to the degree they are challenged to take responsibility for themselves. At the same time, maintaining the amount of school-based home instruction also makes sense as long as students are confronted with increasing demands—this situation is presumably more likely when students attend the highest track and/or suffer from learning disabilities. In both cases, however, adaptations in the *kind* of assistance may be more essential than changes in the *pure amount* of support.

These considerations lead to the next issue: the impact of differences in the *quality* of parental instruction on students' learning outcomes.

With regard to the four-dimensional conceptualization of school-based home instruction described above, we were interested in (a) the predictability of each dimension and (b) changes in autonomy-supportive instruction, structure, control, and emotional involvement over time. Both questions were addressed in a longitudinal study (see Wild and Lorenz 2010; Wild et al. 2006) in which approximately



200 families were visited annually over a period of 6 years. We started with the 3rd graders in order to investigate changes in students' learning outcomes and relevant characteristics of students' learning environment (both in school and at home) during the transition from elementary to middle school. In view of the domain specificity of most learning outcomes, we focused on the quality of parental instruction in the domain of mathematics.

Overall, the findings from our longitudinal study (see, for an overview, Wild and Lorenz 2010) replicate and expand previous work (see, for reviews, Grolnick et al. 2007; Patall et al. 2008; Wild and Lorenz 2010). With respect to the incremental impact of each single dimension of parental instruction, we found that students may profit from their parents' emotional involvement and autonomy support in terms of a higher sense of (domain-specific) self-efficacy, a higher frequency of positive learning emotions (i.e., joy, pride), and more effective strategies to cope with negative learning emotions in the domain of mathematics. Moreover, they also may profit in terms of an incline in self-regulated learning motivation and deep approach-learning strategies that lead to a better conceptual understanding (Deci and Ryan 2000). Interestingly, our results only partly support the notion of negative effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation (see, for further information on cognitive evaluation theory, Deci et al. 1999). Nevertheless, they do indicate that parental control is associated with higher levels of extrinsic motivation. Moreover, it also enhances performance-avoidance goal orientations and increases the likelihood of dysfunctional learning behaviors (such as procrastination or cheating).

Given the current state of research on parental involvement in schooling, it is interesting to know whether changes in the quality of parent involvement may explain the well-known decrease in students' shift from learning to motivation (see, for a review on German findings, Schwinger and Wild 2006). Our results on longitudinal changes in parental instruction support central assumptions of the stage–environment–fit approach (e.g., Eccles et al. 1993; Gutman and Eccles 2007). This approach indicates an increasing mismatch between students' needs and the kind of support provided by parents.

Most notable is the finding that students are more likely to perceive their parents' instruction as controlling as they become older. This result parallels our cross-sectional findings in the domain of German studies (see below) and qualifies them insofar that changes in students' perceptions obviously correspond with changes in their parents' kind of support. In fact, comparisons of parental self-reports over time reveal an increasing tendency to control their children's learning behavior and outcomes. Also in line with the stage–environment–fit approach, we found that autonomy-supportive and responsive kinds of parental instruction decrease over time. However, statistically significant changes were restricted to self-reports of parents.

In sum, our findings indicate—in line with previous results and theoretical assumptions—that the amount and quality of parental involvement change over time. Given the idiosyncrasy of the educational system in Germany, however, it is reasonable to attribute this phenomenon to underlying developmental processes on the individual and/or family level that influence parental involvement over and beyond institutional conditions (e.g., differences in educational systems). At the

same time, our analyses extend the present research in two ways: First, our results suggest that developmental processes taking place on the individual level (in terms of students' growing self-regulation capabilities and their increasing sense for autonomy) interact with changes on the microlevel (i.e., an increasing tendency of parents to react in a controlling manner). Conjointly, they produce changes in the amount and type of parental involvement. Second, significant relations between different kinds of homework practice on the one hand, and a variety of learning outcomes on the other hand, support the assumption that differences in school-based home instruction may contribute at least to some extent to inequalities in students' competencies. Consequently, interventions aiming to improve the quality of parental support may serve as an instrument to improve both our understanding of the mechanisms underlying social inequalities as well as our knowledge concerning the attainable benefit of programs aiming to increase equality.

### **Improving Parental Involvement in Schooling: New Insights into the Alterability and Antecedents of High-Quality, Home-Based Instruction**

A host of studies have shown that educational goals and aspirations of parents are highly stable over time. To test the implicit premise that parental instruction can nevertheless be altered, we conducted an intervention study addressing families of parents with children (5th and 6th graders) suffering from learning difficulties (i.e., problems in the domain of mathematics). The goal of our parent training was to reduce homework conflicts, to enhance parents' self-efficacy, to foster autonomy-supportive and responsive behaviors of parents, and to decrease parents' controlling behaviors (see Rammert 2010; Wild and Gerber 2009; Wittler 2009). The effectiveness of this parent training was examined in a quasi-experimental study following a pre-post, follow-up design and including two experimental groups (face-to-face and autodidactic treatments) and one control group (waiting group).

Preliminary results of this intervention study are encouraging insofar that homework conflicts were reduced significantly in the experimental group. Furthermore, trained parents felt more capable of supporting their children effectively, and they were more likely to help their children in an autonomy-supportive manner. At the same time, parental control decreased over the course of the intervention.

Our findings indicate that homework practice can be altered by parent trainings and raise the question of the target audience of trainings. A second line of our research, therefore, aims at the identification of "risk groups" of families by analyzing potential determinants of adaptive and maladaptive forms of parental instruction in more depth. Theoretically, we picked up the pioneering work of Wendy Grolnick, who has been particularly interested in the preconditions of parental controlling behaviors (see Grolnick and Apostoleris 2002; Gurland and Grolnick 2005), and the framework of Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995). Because the model of parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues

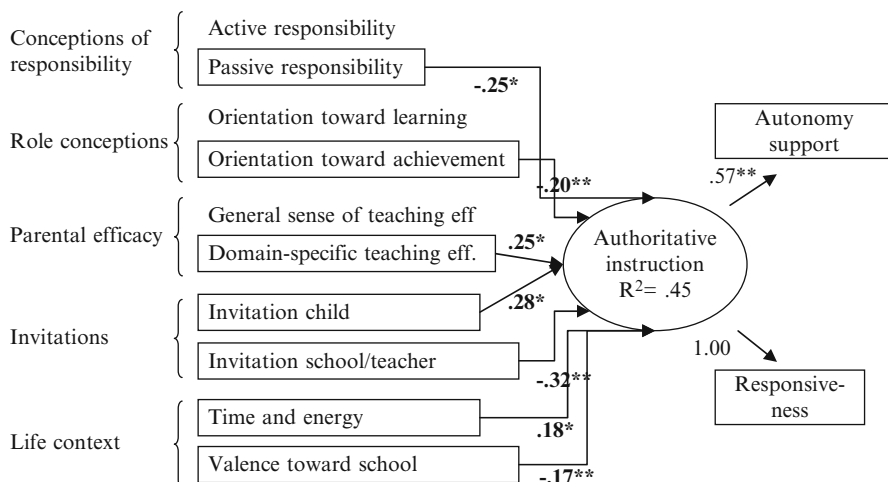
(Green et al. 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 20s05) focuses on preconditions that motivate parents to become involved in a wide range of parental involvement activities, we adopted this model to study determinants of the *quality* of school-based home instruction, in particular.

The working model developed by Yotyodying (2012) proposes five dimensions (first-order factors) of antecedents of the quality of school-based home instruction with two second-order factors per dimension:

- The first dimension, *parental conceptions of responsibility*, distinguishes between active and passive conceptions of responsibility. Actively responsible parents see themselves as being responsible for the learning process and academic performance of their child, whereas passively responsible parents become involved in the child's schooling only when the school expects them to do so.
- The second dimension, *parental role conceptions*, refers to the way in which parents frame learning situations at home. According to Renshaw and Gardner (1990), parents may interpret (informal) learning arrangements primarily as a challenge to promote children's self-regulated learning (process orientation) or to improve academic performance (product orientation).
- The third dimension refers to *parental teaching efficacy*. The model distinguishes between the general confidence of parents in their own teaching skills and efficacy beliefs with regard to a specific domain.
- The fourth dimension is concerned with *invitations to involvement in school-based home instruction*. These invitations can be expressed by the child or by school staff.
- The last dimension, *life context*, refers primarily to the amount of time, and energy parents may devote to their child's learning experiences and school concerns. In addition, it deals with previous school experiences of parents and resulting attitudes concerning the importance of (formal) education.

The construct and factorial validity of this ten-component model of antecedents of the quality of school-based home instruction was tested in a cross-cultural comparison study conducted by Yotyodying (2011). Multiple group confirmatory factor analyses based on a cross-sectional data set of approximately 800 parents from Germany and Thailand yielded an acceptable fit. Furthermore, the model yielded cross-cultural construct validity (model form invariance), and most of the components of the model also yielded cross-cultural factorial validity (factor loadings invariance). Low to moderate intercorrelations between factors indicate good discriminant validity. In addition, the findings of the structural equation model validation revealed that these factors predicted differences in quality of parental instruction in a meaningful way.

Figure 2 depicts the path coefficients between the ten factors and two latent variables reflecting two types of perceived parental instruction: (a) authoritative instruction (comprising autonomy support and responsiveness) and (b) authoritarian instruction (comprising structure and control). The first latent variable was predicted significantly by seven factors. In line with theoretical considerations, it was found that parents are more likely to adopt an authoritative style of instruction the more

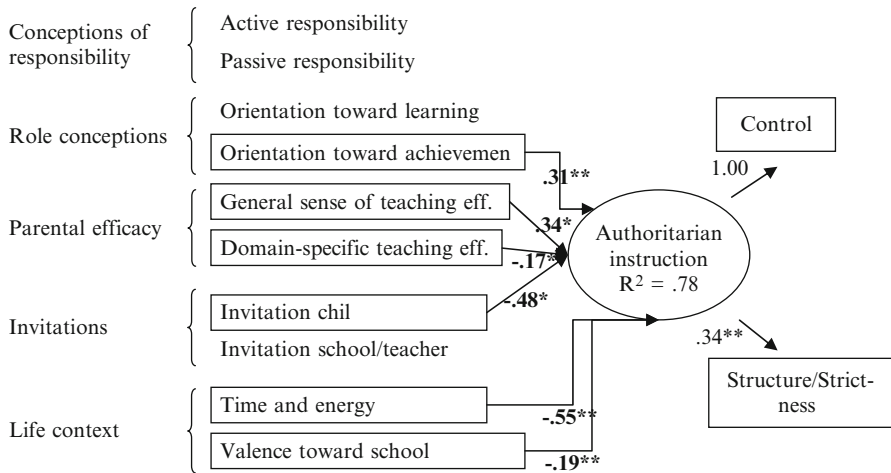


**Fig. 2** Antecedents of authoritative parental instruction. Model fit indices:  $\chi^2(7, N=288)=4.60$ ,  $\chi^2/df=.66$ ,  $p=.75$ , GFI=1.00, AGFI=.97, RMR=.01, RMSEA=.00. \* $p=.05$ . \*\* $p=.01$  (Adapted from Yotyodying 2012)

they report high general self-efficacy, feel invited by the child, and have both enough time and energy to take care of their child’s learning progress and educational attainment. In contrast, parents are less likely to adopt authoritative kinds of instruction when they hold a more passive view of their responsibility, tend to frame learning situations in terms of chances to strive for performance goals, and link their own school days with less positive experiences. Contrary to our expectations, parents are also more likely to create learning situations at home in an authoritative manner the more they perceive that teachers welcome their active participation.

As expected, our findings concerning the adoption of an authoritarian instructional style reveal a somewhat complementary correlational pattern (see Fig. 3). Parents are more likely to control and guide their child’s learning behaviors, the more they are oriented toward performance goals and are confident about their own teaching skills, in general. In contrast, parents are less likely to perform in an authoritarian way the more they feel competent in the specific domain, feel invited by the child, have time and energy, and evaluate their own school-related experiences in a positive way. Interestingly, the degree to which parents feel invited by teachers or schools does not contribute to explaining interindividual differences in authoritarian instruction by parents.

Overall, our results not only support the validity of the multidimensional model of antecedents of the quality of parental involvement in schooling but also indicate that even differences in the instructional practice of parents in varying nations can be explained—to some extent—by ten antecedent factors. Insofar, the present findings extend previous work on explanations of the pure amount of parental involvement by providing empirical evidence for the incremental predictive power of *parental*



**Fig. 3** Antecedents of authoritarian parental instruction. Model fit indices:  $\chi^2(3, N=288) = .28$ ,  $\chi^2/df = .09$ ,  $p = .96$ , GFI = 1.00, AGFI = 1.00, RMR = .00, RMSEA = .00. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (Adapted from Yotyodying 2012)

attitudes (e.g., parental conceptions of responsibility, parental role conceptions, and self-efficacy) and *interpersonal conditions* (i.e., the extent to which parents talk with children and teachers in order to exchange information on school-related issues) across different nations and educational systems.

Of course, some findings warrant further investigations. First of all, our model seems to put greater emphasis on “*risk factors*” (i.e., on circumstances that foster an authoritarian style of instruction or impair an authoritative approach) than on “*protective factors*.” Insofar, further investigation should be directed to identify those parental attitudes, motives, or perceptions of environmental affordances that lead to an increase in parents’ readiness to coach their child’s learning progress in an autonomy-supportive and responsive manner. Furthermore, scientific attention should be addressed to explore in more depth the cost and benefits of school/teacher invitations. Our results indicate that teacher’s invitations may be maladaptive as long as they take place in a culture of parent–teacher consultations that is characterized by a predominance of achievement-related issues in which conflicting interests and viewpoints are in the forefront.

Apart from this consideration, the significance of the present results for educational policy and practice is obvious: Although parent involvement has become an important goal and target for educational reform in many countries, existing programs tend to be pragmatic in their orientation, and (therefore) empirical evidence for their effectiveness is weak (Mattingly et al. 2002). Against this background, the theoretical considerations and results presented here may be transformed into at least three recommendations for optimizing programs to increase parental involvement: (a) Parental trainings should focus on school-based home learning

(vs. participation in school activities and decisions) because students may profit most. (b) These trainings should aim to improve the quality (rather than the amount) of involvement. (c) The sustainability of training effects may be increased by addressing not only parental behavior but also the underlying attitudes and motives.

## School and Family: Unrelated or Overlapping Spheres?

In her “model of overlapping spheres,” Epstein (1986; Epstein et al. 2002) posits that students succeed at higher levels when the internal and external models of influence intersect and work together to promote student learning and development. The external model refers to the contexts in which students live (e.g., home, school, and community), whereas the internal model describes the intersections of interpersonal relations and interactions that can occur on an institutional level (e.g., the school inviting families to a parent night) or an individual level (e.g., parent–teacher conference). With regard to homework assistance, this model posits bidirectional influences between the family and the school environment: The degree and quality of parental involvement should depend not only on *characteristics of the educational system* (e.g., the degree to which the assignment of students to different school tracks depends on socioeconomic status and parental aspirations; legal regulations concerning the right of parents to participate in school-related decisions) but also on the *practice of cooperation between parents and teachers*. The latter can be conceptualized as a function of individual role conceptions, attitudes, skills, and perceived affordances on both sides, which are, in turn, dependent on structural conditions such as the amount of time students have to or may spend in school.

In this context, it is worth noting that the politically motivated expansion of all-day schools (with optional courses [*offene Ganztagschulen*] or obligatory courses [*gebundene Ganztagschulen*]) has recently been pursued in Germany with considerable state resources (Quellenberg 2007). This situation provides a historically unique chance to examine in more detail the interplay between institutional provisions, on the one hand, and the utilization of these institutional resources and its effects, on the other.

Fortunately, data collected in the cross-sectional study of Gerber and Wild (2009) already described above allow us to investigate whether homework practice differs depending on “school structure” (i.e., half-day schools vs. all-day schools). Analyses of a total of 541 reports by 4th-, 6th-, and 10th-grade students showed that the majority of German students (71.0% of the sample) still attend a half-day school but do not utilize the homework assistance their school provides. A second group (21.3% of all students) attends an all-day school and also does not take homework assistance in school into consideration. Consequently, only a few students rely on institutional homework supervision, and this minority is pretty evenly split into two subgroups: students attending an all-day school (4.3%) and a half-day school (3%).

Do these four groups differ in their homework practice? Our analyses revealed that neither the time students spent on completing their homework, nor the likelihood of homework conflicts, nor the quality of parental instruction as perceived by the child, nor the degree to which mothers, fathers, siblings, and professionals are involved differs depending on group membership. We also found that neither socioeconomic status nor maternal employment status had strong correlations with either group affiliation or parental involvement in schooling.

Overall, our results suggest, in line with findings of a large panel study (see Holtappels et al. 2007), that the social or ethnic background of students does not explain whether they attend an all-day school or not and utilize homework assistance at school or not. Most notably, the quality of parental instruction does not seem to vary depending on institutional homework supervision or social class.

If our findings can be replicated in further studies, several interesting questions arise. One of the most important is: which societal conditions may explain why school-offered homework assistance is hardly used in Germany? Cross-cultural studies are needed to test the assumption that albeit global social changes in conceptions of childhood and parenting may not only reinforce parents' feelings of responsibility for their children's educational outcomes but also their children's psychosocial adjustment.

Obviously, a large and continuously increasing percentage of German parents are convinced that children have to be prepared for school as early as possible, and most parents (across social classes) feel obliged to make tremendous investments in their children's academic career over and beyond formal education (Merkle and Wippermann 2008). This trend may facilitate the formation of school–family partnerships but may, contrariwise, complicate endeavors to create two-way communication channels between school and home to the extent that parents doubt the effectiveness of the school system and/or perceive the school primarily as an authority for selecting and allocating options. Moreover, school programs fostering parental involvement may be functional in terms of empowering but, at the same time, may enhance existing defenses of teachers and overburden parents who do not have the required skills and resources. Therefore, further research is needed to identify requirements of parents, teachers, schools, and communities that are necessary to ensure that national standards for family–school partnerships (like those of the National Parent Teacher Association 2008) do not degenerate into a “tyranny of participation.”

With respect to school-based home instruction, our findings indicate that proximal variables such as parental role conceptions or children's invitations may explain differences in the quality of homework practice. In this context, children's invitations refer to the extent children ask for help or offer parents the chance to participate in their childhood experiences. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of parent involvement programs, it is meaningful to focus not only on issues of parental behavior but also on parental attitudes, motives, and efficacy beliefs.

Nowadays, the majority of parents are willing to support their children's learning progress and are actively engaged in learning processes at home. Nevertheless, there are differences in the quality—and, in turn, in the effectiveness—of parental

instruction. Consequently, trainings aiming to improve the quality of school-based home instruction should inform parents about which strategies are counterproductive and what kinds of support may enhance students' learning motivation, self-regulation competencies, and performance. In this context, our results validate and extend previous work (Helmke et al. 2004; Niggli et al. 2007; Trautwein et al. 2001) on the differential impact of distinct types of parental help on students' learning outcomes.

In the United States, the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001* was a starting point for a variety of programs to improve the quality of schools by increasing parental involvement and facilitating the formation of effective school–family partnerships. The common mission of these programs is to close the achievement gap through accountability, flexibility, and choice so that “no child” is left behind. Our findings substantiate the importance of this mission and provide some information on how to implement it successfully.

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# “Having to Keep Silent”: A Capabilities Perspective on Growing Up and the “Education Process” in a Migration Family

Christine Hunner-Kreisel

When discussing the generation of war children (born shortly before or during World War II) and the impact of their posttraumatic stress on many families and intergenerational relational structures, Grundmann and Hoffmeister (2007, p. 272, translated) speak of a “pathological normality of keeping silent,” in this case, referring mainly to maintaining silence about what they had personally experienced. When discussing the remarkable silence of war children, these authors speak of a nonaccidental parallel between the speechlessness that emerges between the generations and the low public interest in these persons throughout almost the entire postwar period.

I have chosen this historical<sup>1</sup> introduction to the present chapter because the convincing example of the war children generation clarifies in precise terms the relevance to education policy of the theme of silence as a practice of being unable to speak. This chapter addresses a type of “having to keep silent” in the context of growing up in a migration family. The underlying thesis is that both here and in postwar Germany, we are dealing with a case of “invisibility” (Honneth 2009, p. 10) or “inaudibility” (in the sense of not being heard). From the perspective of education theory, this chapter uses a case report to elaborate how “having to keep silent” is linked to the individual migration history of a family and how the suffering induced by having to keep silent influences the interviewee’s educational career. The underlying definition of education used here is a process of individual self-constitution that forms and matures even in a context characterized by resistance and the painful experience of a fragmented identity (Pongratz and Bünger 2008, p. 117). This points toward fragile education processes, asking what significance this being silent or being unable to speak to parents or closest relatives has for the process of self-constitution.

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<sup>1</sup>Historical is correct only insofar as the reason for the silence of the generation of war children lies in the past, whereas the resulting problems for those still living lie in the present.

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For education policy, this indicates a need to focus more attention on fragile biographical education processes in (migration) society, that is, in its twofold condition as both a resource and a challenge (see Badawia 2002, p. 160; Günther 2006, p. 103; Herwartz-Emden et al. 2010, p. 42; Hummrich 2009, p. 249; Mannitz 2006, p. 301; Nohl 2001, p. 192; Pott 2006, p. 42). This challenge is based on the polarity of having to keep silence pictured in the case report below as a state of suffering because of not being able to fulfill the elementary human need for communication. The lack of communication between actors here is viewed from the perspective of the capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2000a, 2010), asking how far having to keep silent, being unable to speak, has to be conceived as an absence of well-being and the freedom to act and thus as an absence of human dignity and lack of capabilities, as well as an expression of social inequality. At the same time, I shall use the case report to demonstrate how far suffering from having to keep silent embodies a paradoxical resource for the self-constitution process of the interviewee, in particular, her capability to feel empathy and (self-) respect and, as a consequence, her ability to engage in the *capability of affiliation* (Nussbaum 2000a, p. 79, 2010, p. 235). The analysis of this individual capability process suggests where structural and institutional processes of support and protection of fragile education processes need to be applied if success is not to depend on the principle of contingency or turn into failure.

This chapter is structured as follows: The next section explains the research design of the basic study as well as the key category of “having to keep silent, being unable to speak.” Subsequently, I shall present a case report demonstrating the meaning of having to keep silent for the life phases of childhood, youth, and young adulthood. The subsequent section analyzes the interviewee’s subjective interpretations of well-being and capability. A further interpretation draws on the capabilities approach with a focus on the capability of affiliation and analyzes this suffering from having to keep silent as a paradoxical resource. The article closes with considerations on how to protect fragile education processes.

## **The Case Report: Growing Up in the Family and the Education Process**

### ***Research Design and the Key Category of “Having to Keep Silent, Being Unable to Speak”***

The case report is part of a study involving ten narrative–biographical interviews with young adults.<sup>2</sup> All members of the sample had a migration background, the same level of education, and similar ages. They were social work students at the Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences aged 24–31 years. Although they all had, in the broadest sense, a Muslim background, this feature being also one of the selection

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<sup>2</sup>Data were collected in 2008.

criteria for the sample,<sup>3</sup> this category faded into the background, because, already after the first few interviews, the narration request was only about growing up in the family instead of growing up as a Muslim. Common to the narrations was an unexpected (partly even traumatic) difficulty in growing up within the biographies of the interviewees that manifested on different levels. This was unexpected by either the interviewees or myself, adding a high emotional intensity to the situation (cf. Küsters 2009, p. 68). During the course of the first evaluations based on open coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 61), the focus shifted to how family relations were structured against the backdrop of the parental migration history and how the interviewees had constituted their selves. Significant categories, which also developed in comparative analyses (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 96) of the interviews, were “respect” as an orientational frame in the context of relations between the generations (Hunner-Kreisel 2010, p. 180) and “having to keep silent, being unable to speak.” Methodologically, the evaluation was oriented toward the grounded theory method used by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The case report presented here is based on the biographical narrations and memories of a 25-year-old woman who will be called Yasemin in the following. Her family background is a politically motivated migration of her parents from Turkey. Relevant for the aspect of having to keep silent, being unable to speak is, on the one side, the political background to the parents’ migration to Germany. As members of the Alevi community, they had been persecuted by the Turkish authorities, culminating in the imprisonment of the mother when she was pregnant with her first child. This traumatic experience for the parental couple and—not uncommon when growing up as Alevi—having to deal with one’s origins and affiliation (cf. also Sökefeld 2008; Motika and Langer 2005, pp. 87–88) are meaningful elements when using interpretations of the interviewee as a child, as an adolescent, and as young adult to reconstruct and classify the suffering from having to keep silent, being unable to speak. Silence (in a sense of concealment) in the context of the Alevi diaspora (see also Hunner-Kreisel 2006, p. 101) is an expression and continuation of a cultural–religious, as well a politically relevant tradition of protecting one’s own community (Sökefeld 2008, p. 44). Because of their political persecution in Turkey, many Alevi already practiced the Shiite principle of *takiya* (Halm 1994, p. 17), that is, the right to keep your own religion secret when threatened and to adopt the lifestyle of the majority. Even in Germany, many Alevi continue to follow the principle of *takiya*—partly because of the extremely difficult relations between Sunni and Alevi migrants (Sökefeld 2008, pp. 105, 115). In line with the present case report, Sökefeld (2003, p. 250) depicts comparable autobiographical reports by Alevi migrants in Germany in which the principle of *takiya* was practiced in the own family, and the children only began to notice differences when they compared their religious practices with those of other Muslim children (Sökefeld 2008, p. 45). Or, as in the present case, they became aware of their own lack of (religious–cultural–national) affiliation. Nevertheless, having to keep silent is not a specifically Alevi phenomenon in the context of growing up under the conditions of

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<sup>3</sup>Sampling was carried out on the basis of both personal contacts and addresses obtained from third parties.

migration. In my own study, having to keep silent is more of a central category, revealing an asymmetry in terms of the *responsiveness*<sup>4</sup> between individual family members, particularly in the parent–child relation. Yet, failed responsiveness cannot be assigned to the migration experience alone. The data also showed that failed responsiveness could also be analyzed from the perspectives of adolescence, gender, generation, or social origin. As a consequence, we can assume that the phenomenon of failed responsiveness and the accompanying having to keep silent can also be found in families without a migration background. This is less important for the present analysis because the fragility of education processes is only being examined for the example of familial growing up in a migration context. The significance of the questions deduced from this can then be transferred to all adolescents.

***The Case Report of Yasemin: “Well, it makes no difference, you’re simply a human being ... just tell’em that!”***

*Childhood: Having to keep silent as being unable to speak.* Yasemin begins her narration with a lengthy, chronologically successive account of her family history of interior migration covering several relocations within Germany that she found “totally dreadful, being a child” (line 35). The chronological, geographical, and emotional presentation of the interior migration history is followed by a relatively abrupt change of topic:

German quote	English summary
und ...ja, soviel erstmal so. Also zu dem Ablauf vom Wohnort her. Ja meine Eltern haben das zum Beispiel ...immer so gehandhabt, dass sie uns halt, äh, uns nicht so klar gesagt haben, was wir jetzt sind. Also was jetzt zum Beispiel so nationale Identität oder so was angeht. Und da hab ich zum Beispiel auch schon erste Erfahrungen im Kindergarten – äh, in der Grundschule gemacht, dass ich dann von irgendwelchen Kindern immer gefragt wurde ‘Ja, was bist du denn? Bist du jetzt irgendwie richtige Muslimin, bist du Türkin, bist du Kurdin?’ Und das ich halt selber überhaupt gar nicht darauf antworten konnte. Dann bin ich halt irgendwie zu meinen Eltern gegangen nach der Schule und hab halt immer gefragt und dann kam halt nie so ne richtige Antwort. Also dann wurde halt immer gesagt ‘Ja, das ist doch egal, du bist halt einfach ,’n Mensch...und sag denen das auch einfach so!’ Was ich halt im Nachhinein total schön finde, aber als Kind hat mir da halt auch voll was gefehlt. Weil man halt nicht so ähm, sich nirgendswo so richtig einordnen konnte. (Zeile 65–84)	And, yes, so much for now. So, about the way things went with the place we lived. Well, my parents always handled it in such a way for example, that they didn’t tell us clearly who we are now. I mean, regarding national identity and the like. And I had already had my first experiences in kindergarten, um, I mean, elementary school, that there was always some child asking me: “Well, what are you then? Are you a real Muslim somehow, are you a Turk, are you a Kurd?” And that I wasn’t able to answer this by myself. So I somehow went to my parents after school, and I always asked, but I never got a real answer. They always said, “Well, it doesn’t matter, you’re simply a human being ... just tell them that!” In retrospect, I find that totally beautiful, but as a child, I was really missing something. Because you just couldn’t um really fit yourself in anywhere. (Lines 65–84)

<sup>4</sup>The concept of responsiveness is chosen for a qualitative framing of inner familial relations. It is based on the significance of the question of morality in personal relations within my own study

After completing her interior migration history, she shifts the topic toward the experience with her national–ethno–cultural affiliation (Mecheril 2003, p. 252) and her helplessness when it comes to answering this question—which she perceives as an inability. Although in retrospect, she evaluates her experiences positively in terms of her personal development, she reconstructs her experiences in her memories as a form of being lost: She cannot answer the question on her affiliation. Evidently, her parents’ advice to say she was simply a human being<sup>5</sup> was only a slight help.

*Youth: Having to keep silent as being unable to speak.* Yasemin goes on to describe her growing anger with her parents whom she holds responsible for her experiences:

German quote	English summary
<p>ja. Also früher, so in der Grundschule, hab´ ich hab´ ich das eigentlich noch so relativ locker genommen, so in der Pubertät kam dann eher so ´ne Krise, dass ich so überhaupt nicht wusste, äh, wo ich jetzt überhaupt hingehöre. Und dann... hab´ ich auch ziemlich stark gegen meine Eltern rebellierte und wollte halt immer wissen- also ich hab´ dann halt auch zu der Zeit so- so fingen halt erste Rassismuserfahrungen an so im Alter- so- halt ab dem Zeitpunkt, als ich auf dem Gymnasium war... und dann (*2*) jetzt muss ich kurz nachdenken (*2*) ja genau, ich war bei der Rebellion. Und zwar, äh, ist das dann- also dann hab´ ich halt total rumgebohrt. Ich hab´ irgendwie voll meine Eltern dafür verurteilt, dass ich halt diese Erfahrungen mache, dass sie überhaupt nach Deutschland gekommen sind (*4*) und (*2*) ja irgendwann hab´ ich dann auch mal erfahren, warum überhaupt meine Eltern nach Deutschland gekommen sind. (Zeile 129–143)</p>	<p>Well. So back then, I mean in elementary school, I took it all quite easily. Around puberty, it was something of a crisis that I had absolutely no idea where I belonged. And then . . . I rebelled quite strongly against my parents and always wanted to know, well it was also at that time that I had my first experiences of racism, about the age of, about the time I started Gymnasium [upper secondary school] . . . and then (*2*) I have to think for a minute (*2*) yes, exactly, I was talking about rebellion. That is, I totally annoyed them with my questions. I somehow condemned my parents for me having to go through these experiences and being brought to Germany in the first place (*4*) and (*2*) well, at some point, I eventually found out why my parents had come to Germany. (Lines 129–143)</p>

that, following Honneth and RöSSLer (2008, p. 24, translated), is considered to be “constitutive for the education of successful practical identities in familial relations,” as well as “constitutive for our practical relation to the self; for the question of who we are and how we want to live.” In particular, their remark on the same page that “the question of morality of personal relations directly [contains] the question of the significance of individual autonomy and a successful life” has guided my own study.

<sup>5</sup>From a religious studies perspective, one might add for the sake of completeness that this is a typical feature of the self-characterization of Alevi religiosity. In the context of Alevilik, it is not the following of “precepts” that is ascribed a central role; it is the human being, the person, who is at the center of religiosity (Sökefeld 2008, p. 115). This localization possesses no religious significance for the interviewee because she is, according to her own account, neither religious nor has any religious knowledge. However, in this case, the parents have transferred a religious–cultural element that the interviewee transforms—in an idiosyncratic interpretation—into a significant category within the framework of her self-constitution process.

Yasemin blames her parents for having to go through these experiences. Experiences mean the feeling of being excluded, experiencing pain, and suffering because one does not automatically belong. She wants to understand why her parents placed her in this situation in the first place and then she finds out the reason, namely, that her parents migrated because they had suffered political persecution in Turkey for being Alevi. This may have revealed part of the secret, but it also leads to the topic no longer being addressed, and Yasemin no longer asking questions.

German quote	English summary
<p>Das war nämlich auch so 'n Thema, was ganz lange totgeschwiegen wurde. Worüber man halt einfach nicht geredet hatte, so dass sie halt irgendwie politisch verfolgt waren und dass meine Mutter halt auch im Gefängnis war in der Türkei und dass sie halt, ähm, da ganz schlimme Erfahrungen gemacht hat und das war dann so der Einschnitt, dass ich dann aufgehört hab' irgendwie, darüber so nachzufragen und so. Und danach wurde dann auch nie wieder darüber geredet, das wurd' halt immer so 'n bisschen verschwiegen (*2*).(Zeile 146–155)</p>	<p>It was also the kind of topic that was hushed up for a very long time. You simply didn't talk about the fact that they had somehow been politically persecuted in Turkey, that my mother was also in prison, and that they had gone through, umm, very bad experiences, and that was a kind of turning point, and I stopped asking questions about it and so. And after that, we never talked about again; it was sort of always kept quiet about (*2*). (Lines 146–155)</p>

It turns out that Yasemin's effort to speak with her mother about the events—at this point, she is 14 years old—leads to her mother having a nervous breakdown, after which, the topic is never mentioned again.

*Young adulthood: Breaking the silence.* When asked at what point she had closed the topic for herself, Yasemin said that, on the one hand, she was still dealing with it. On the other hand, it had gotten better with time. During puberty, she had repeatedly tried to be normal like the other girls. “Always being like all the other German girls ... And then I went to parties, drinking alcohol and so on. And those were the signs confirming that I was somehow totally normal [((clears her throat))].” (Lines 893–904). The turning point in her process of self-constitution comes during her year doing voluntary social work. Here, Yasemin finds a roundabout way to deal with her parents' history. Encountering “compatriots” [*landsleute*], as she calls them while volunteering at a residence for persons applying for asylum, she feels that they enable her to get to know something about her roots and her origins (Lines 918–931). These compatriots obviously become sort of substitute conversation partners for her through whom she is able to approach her parents' experiences. She also meets people who knew her parents from when they lived in their hometown of Tunceli in Turkey and went to school with them. She meets someone who has known her own uncle for 30 years and was even in prison together with him. These talks help Yasemin, according to her own statements, to grasp her parents' experiences and learn to accept their silence about them. They also help her to break out of her own silence.



The following section reconstructs the suffering due to having to keep silent and being unable to speak. It interprets its meaning in terms of how the interviewee perceives her well-being and capabilities and then investigates these in terms of a capability of affiliation in the sense of Nussbaum. However, this first calls for a brief description of the capabilities approach.

### ***The Interviewee’s Interpretations of Well-Being and the Capability to “Affiliation” from a Capabilities Perspective***

*Nussbaum’s capabilities approach: The meaning of well-being and capability.* The capabilities approach (CA) promotes an equal rights conception of social justice (Otto and Ziegler 2010, p. 9) that essentially addresses the quality of human capabilities. On one side, the CA is a tool for measuring human capabilities; on the other side, it is also a justice theory, and in its extension by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2000a) presented here, it is also a philosophical approach dealing with the question of what the state has to provide for each individual citizen so that she or he can lead a “good life,” that is, a dignified life in which individuals can decide according to their own good reasons who they want to be and how they want to live. Therefore, the CA calls for “taking into account not only the perspectives and abilities of the subjects but also the objective conditions for making decisions and acting, and using this combination as a basis for an innovative approach to address the conditions of success and the ‘good life’” (Albus et al. 2009, p. 347, translated).

Martha Nussbaum, who has formulated the version of CA I am referring to in this chapter, ascribes institutions a central role in promoting human abilities (Nussbaum 2010, p. 424). For growing up, this means granting the right to free spaces providing capabilities in the family context as well. The basic capabilities have been compiled by Martha Nussbaum in the form of a ten-item list (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 78–80) that claims to be universal.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on Aristotle and Marx, it

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<sup>6</sup>When replying to the massive criticism of the normativity and essentialization of this list, Martha Nussbaum stresses the “thick, vague concept of the good” (Nussbaum 1998, p. 207). Accordingly, one essential element of the list is that it can be altered and extended to fit the given social and cultural context (Nussbaum 1998, p. 209). She justifies the list’s claim to normativity essentially in terms of the close relation between the items on the lists and common human rights (Nussbaum 2008). In particular, empirical research on well-being cannot avoid a normative frame in the form of objective measures in a context of an affirmative positioning toward Nussbaum’s list. This also assumes that adaptive preferences (Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 119–122) can distort the subjective perception of well-being, making it impossible to uncover the power and inequality in social relations solely on the basis of subjective interpretations (cf. Albus et al. 2009, pp. 345–346; Olssen 2010, p. 15; Ziegler 2010, p. 91).

lists the basic capabilities each person should have at their disposal. Looking at the present case report, the emphasis on liberty of decisions and actions becomes a significant starting point for capabilities. The following section will follow Nussbaum's statements on the key category of "affiliation," which is assigned a high rank next to practical reason in her list, and interpret having to keep silent as an expression of a capability deficit.

*Having to keep silent, being unable to talk as a lack of capability for affiliation.* In the context of which basic capabilities an individual needs, Nussbaum (2000a, p. 92) assigns a key role to the categories she calls "affiliation" and "practical reason": "My own view, similarly, has given capabilities for love and affiliation a central role in the political conception itself, as central social goals" (p. 247). Nussbaum (2000a) describes the content of affiliation as follows:

A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interactions; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship.... B. Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin. (p. 83)

Viewed from the perspective of the postulate of dignity that Nussbaum (2010, p. 225) roots in human needs, the significance of suffering from silence in childhood and youth implies that, because of the impossibility of engaging in a communication-based interaction as a basic human need, suffering can be conceived as the absence of well-being and freedom of action, as well as the absence of human dignity (cf. Nussbaum 2000a, pp. 89–90<sup>7</sup>). Not only Yasemin's having to keep silent as not being allowed to speak with her mother about the trauma she had experienced but also the both prior and subsequent being unable to speak as an incapability to give the social environs precise answers about her own national–ethno–cultural affiliation expresses (through the lack of responsivity in the interaction with her mother or her parents) a missing relationship level. Her mother (and, evidently, her father as well) cannot communicate the experience that, as a trauma, becomes the trigger for migration. The issues of migration events, origins, and the categorizability required by the receiving society generate what Yasemin calls a feeling of being lost. She stands alone on this issue, without any interactions and relationships with her family and her extrafamilial environs. With her parents, she is not allowed to communicate, and, with the social–institutional environs, she is unable to communicate. Having to keep silent, being unable to speak becomes a lack of capability in the sense of having no opportunity to decide

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<sup>7</sup>Nussbaum (2000a, p. 91) assumes that capabilities are already a goal in (young) children.

whether to speak. With reference to affiliation, it inhibits interaction with others resulting in a loss of self-respect and dignity. Thus, being unable to speak has to be viewed as a potential source of social inequality.

However, in the reconstruction of the interpretations of young adults, the suffering from silence that had led to a lack of capability during childhood and adolescence is now reappraised. In the process of Yasemin’s self-constitution, suffering from silence becomes a paradoxical resource for her education process.

*Well-being and capabilities in young adults: Suffering from having to keep silent as a paradoxical resource for the capability of affiliation.* This section will argue that for Yasemin, her experience of suffering through silence becomes a paradoxical resource for her own successful education process. When referring to her adolescence, Yasemin still talked of having found a state of normality she compared with the normality of the “German girls.” During the time she was engaged in voluntary social work in a residence for asylum seekers, a transformation process occurs in the sense of an altered view of the world and of the self (Stojanov 2006, p. 115). This makes Yasemin independent from normative models of the self and thus able to find a kind of self-respect like that to be found in Nussbaum’s definition. She now knows what is “her own thing” and her “place in the world,” and she defines this independently from categories of national, religious, or cultural determination. Here, we can see a relation to the capability of being treated as a being with dignity, whose value is equal to that of others:

German quote	English summary
<p>es also es war ja schon so ´n Prozess, das Ganze bei mir. Also heute von mir würd´ ich sagen, dass ich da total gut mit klarkomme, dass ich irgendwie ganz genau weiß, dass ich irgendwo- also dass ich so meinen Platz habe, der aber weder so-... also der schon so in der deutschen Gesellschaft ist... aber halt mit ´nem anderen Background einfach. Aber dass ich das auch nicht ganz klar als deutsch, oder als türkisch oder als kurdisch oder als alevitisch oder so bezeichnen würde, sondern einfach so mein eigenes Ding. (Zeile 181–190)</p>	<p>It—so it was to me a kind of a process, all of that. I guess, today I would say I deal quite well with knowing exactly that for me somewhere, that there is a place, which is neither ... well I am situated within German society ... but simply with a different background. But I wouldn’t really call it German, or Turkish, or Kurdish, or Alevi, or so, but simply as my own thing. (Lines 181–190)</p>

We have to speak of a paradoxical resource of suffering in this connection because the own path of suffering triggered by having to keep silent is a key prerequisite for the transformation process. Being able to speak with the people living at the residence for asylum seekers triggers a transformative education process so that the former suffering from being unable to speak becomes a resource for affiliation and an empathic reconstruction of the parental biography and how her parents relate to her. This makes it possible for her to reconstruct the parental experience cognitively and thus, in the sense of Nussbaum, in an empathic way.

German quote	English summary
<p>Also viel über den Konflikt, einfach- dann konnte ich- also ich hab´ dann halt viel mit denen geredet und die waren halt teilweise auch so alt wie meine Eltern. Und dadurch konnte ich vielleicht auch meine Eltern so ´n stückweit besser verstehen. Weil ich halt mit meinen Eltern nicht darüber reden konnte oder es einfach immer vermieden hab´,[...] Also, zum Beispiel hab´ ich einfach erfahren, was- was damals halt wirklich abgegangen ist. Also dass... mir auch mal bewusst geworden ist, dass das wirklich solche Sachen- so Sachen sind bei meinen Eltern, die so tief sitzen, dass sie gar nicht drüber reden wollen. (*2*) Mh. (*3*) Ja. ((lacht))... Ich muss mich mal gerad´ bisschen sammeln. ... Also jetzt so über den Konflikt... jetzt nichts- also jetzt nicht so politisch oder so. Aber halt ihre eigenen Erfahrungen, was sie halt für Erfahrungen gemacht haben. Diskriminierungserfahrungen, Erfahrungen mit Folter und auch... den Rassismus nenn ich ´s mal, in der Türkei. Und dann die Erfahrung des neuen Rassismus´ halt in Deutschland, diesen- den sie halt gemacht haben und (*2*). (Zeile 939–945)</p>	<p>Well, a lot about the conflict, simply—well, so I talked a lot with them and some of them were also my parents’ age. And that made me understand my parents better in some ways. Because I just couldn’t talk about it with my parents, or, I often avoided it. ... For example, I simply learned what had really happened back then. So that ... I also became aware that those were really things, such things with my parents, that are buried so deep that they don’t want to talk about them at all. (*2*) Mh. (*3*) Yes. ((laughs)) ... Now, I have to collect myself for a moment. ... Well, now about the conflict ... nothing, well, nothing political or so. Simply their own experiences, what they went through. Experiences with discrimination, torture, and also, well I shall call it racism, in Turkey. And then, this experience they have made with further racism in Germany, and (*2*). (Lines 939–945)</p>

In order to feel empathy, a person must, according to Nussbaum (2001, p. 324), have the capability of imagination, of being able to imagine the suffering of the other. Here, the precondition for the capability of empathy for others is, according to Nussbaum (2001, p. 324) and in contrast to Aristotle, not necessarily dependent on a personal experience of suffering (“compassion does not entail personal vulnerability”). However, with reference to Rousseau, Nussbaum (2000b, p. 148) deems that realizing one’s personal vulnerability and imagining the possibility of one’s own suffering are indispensable for being able to feel empathy. This is a further aspect in which the suffering from silence that Yasemin has experienced can be interpreted in the sense of a paradoxical resource that not only initiates a search process to confront the history of her parents and thus of herself but also facilitates the process of understanding her parents by feeling empathy for them. As a result of this confrontation, Yasemin develops an attitude of understanding and compassion toward her parents. Eventually, she respects her parents’ life design of silence, without having to carry on suffering herself and without having to give up her empathy with her parents. This becomes clear in the further course of the interview when she expresses sadness over her mother’s inability to find redemption from her trauma and her refusal to consider therapy (Lines 564–580). In Nussbaum’s sense of affiliation, one can say that her confrontation with and productive transformation of the resource of her own experience of suffering has granted her the capability “to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation” (Nussbaum 2000a, p. 79).

## Fragile Education Processes and the Protection of Their Success

Even though in the present case report, the interviewee succeeded in using the suffering experienced in her own biography as a resource or as a starting point for the capability of reflection and empathy and for her eventually successful education process, the limited well-being and the limited action scope during childhood and adolescence must not be ignored. Against this backdrop, the question arises how far a research in educational science that views the well-being of children and adolescents as its pedagogical benchmark needs to take the biographical analyses presented here and examine (successful) education processes in terms of their specific effects during individual life phases. This task also emerges against the backdrop of the fragility of success of biographies that are precarious along some dimensions of the socialization and education process whose specific challenges threaten them with failure.

An important discourse within pedagogical migration research focuses on whether the migration event should be viewed as a resource or as a challenge<sup>8</sup> to growing up and completing education processes successfully (cf. Badawia 2002; Günther 2006; Herwartz-Emden et al. 2010; Hummrich 2009; Mannitz 2006; Nohl 2001; Pott 2006). Nohl (2001, p. 153) has used the example of a group of Turkish male adolescents in Germany<sup>9</sup> to point out how their capability to act is maintained only by separating key spheres into “interior” environments (in which they interact within the family, relatives, and the ethnic community) and “exterior” environments (the social public and its institutions). This separation is an outcome of experiencing that the contents of one sphere cannot be communicated within the confines of the other. With reference to my own work, one could say that this is also a case of having to keep silent and being unable to speak. Therefore, my own interpretation is that we are dealing with a process of suffering that forms at least part of the education and socialization process (cf. also Stojanov 2006, p. 189). This example and remarks in education theory on the fragility of education processes lead to a further question from a welfare state perspective: How can the state and society support and protect education processes in the heterogeneous fields of socialization that are likely to emerge through a familial migration event? To start with, this question would have to deal with an altered perception of the “pathological normality of silence” that Grundmann and Hoffmeister (2007) have confirmed in the way the family and also society dealt with the generation of war children. In my opinion, this

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<sup>8</sup>Krassimir Stojanov (2006, p. 185, translated) remarks that viewing migration experience as a resource for “creative potential” serves as a necessary “theoretical optics for empirical studies on migration as a whole. Without it, it will develop a shortened view of the migration experience as a deficit of identity that is biased through its own empirical material, so that it may itself become a part of the practices of cultural-biographical disrespect.”

<sup>9</sup>Here, in a much reduced summary of the study’s results.

is also true for migration in our society. For Yasemin, the moment when the silence was broken and she was able to deal with her and her parents' fate was the opportunity to talk about questions of her affiliation.

Hence, it is necessary to ask which structural and institutional spaces and opportunities of speaking (for a critical assessment, see Mecheril<sup>10</sup> 2005, p. 317) have to be installed in order to avoid placing the responsibility for dealing with the migration event and its effects on the education process on the adolescents in these families (or grandparents, parents, and children) and leaving them to cope with it alone. As Habermas (1995, pp. 65–66, translated) has pointed out: “adolescents ... [can] only relate to something in the social world by performing a communicative act when they know how to adapt a norm-conformative attitude and orient their actions towards normative validity claims.”

In the case of Yasemin, we can say that she could not enter a communication with her extrafamilial environment on the issue of her origin, because her parents—for reasons that have become evident—did not place the necessary norms, that is, having a national, cultural, or religious affiliation, at her disposal. The category “human” or her parents' statement, “well, it makes no difference, you are simply a human being ... just tell'em that!” does not help Yasemin, because being simply human is not a sufficiently normed and thus socially accepted category. However, one could argue with Mecheril (2005, p. 315) that “being able to speak” is conditioned by the resource of “being heard.” That is why it was no use for Yasemin to say she was a human being because simply being human was not heard or ignored.

At the beginning of this chapter, I used Honneth's (2009) metaphor of “invisibility” to formulate the thesis that “inaudibility” is involved in both the example of war children and the present case of growing up with migration. Yasemin's desire to speak about her past is not being heard by her parents, who, because of their own traumata, cannot comply with this wish. From the perspective of education policy, however, it can be stated that educational institutions and society have not heard her either, because the statement “I am simply a human being” evidently receives insufficient recognition.

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<sup>10</sup>In the context of a creation of spaces in which “the others” can present themselves by, for example, narrating, Mecheril (2005) speaks of the problem of “othering,” the fixed definition of the other as “other.”

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**Part III**  
**Meeting Parents' and Children's Needs:**  
**Professionals in Schools**

# Pushing Parents Away: The Role of District Bureaucracy in an Urban School

Erin McNamara Horvat

While the impact of school bureaucracy has been recognized over time as critical to understanding how schools work and assessing the capacity of public schools to educate the populace (Bidwell 2001; Payne 2008; Rogers 2009; Rogers and Chung 1983), how bureaucratic structures impact on students and parents has not been well articulated. As Honig (2009, p. 418) pointed out, much of this work does not go beyond broad-brush portraits of district bureaucracy. More research is needed that goes beyond the “impersonal reference to ‘districts’ as actors and toward uncovering the human dimensions” of the bureaucracy. In particular, the literature on economic integration has not examined the institutional factors that facilitate or suppress middle-class participation in mixed-income schools. Using ethnographic data collected from the Darcy<sup>1</sup> school (a pseudonym), I provide a detailed account of the way district policies pushed middle-class parents away from an urban public school.

This chapter investigates the role of school district bureaucracy in the enrollment process and the experiences of middle-class<sup>2</sup> families in a high-performing urban public K-8 (kindergarten to grade 8) school in a city in the northeastern

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to using pseudonyms, in some cases, I have also changed identifying information to protect the confidentiality of our informants.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of “middle class” is contentious. Class definitions are extremely complicated and are the subject of a large body of sociological research (e.g., Lareau and Conley 2008; Weeden and Grusky 2005; Wright 2005). One common (but not universal) way of determining middle-class status involves a combination of income, education, and occupation. Here, I categorize a family as middle class if at least one of the parents is college-educated and at least one of the parents is employed in a professional or creative capacity or is the owner of a business. Families were categorized as working class if neither parent was college-educated or employed in a professional or creative capacity or owned his or her own business.

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United States I call “Brickton.” I focus on these middle-class parents’ and children’s experiences due to the potential they have for improving education for all students through their cultural, social, and financial capital (Edelberg and Kurland 2009; Grant 2009; Kahlenberg 2001). Some researchers argue that because middle-class families often have a wealth of social, cultural, and financial capital, their presence in public schools leads to improved achievement for all students (Bazelon 2008; Gottlieb 2004; Grant 2009; Kahlenberg 2001; Wake Education Partnership 2008). Indeed, some districts have redesigned school enrollment policy in order to create socioeconomically integrated schools (Grant 2009; Kahlenberg 2007). In other districts, parents and school leaders have tried—absent formal policies—to increase middle-class enrollment. I present data drawn from a K-8 school in one large urban district in the northeastern United States in which efforts to attract middle-class parents to the school and to utilize their resources to catalyze school improvement met with mixed results. I argue that school district bureaucracy presents an obstacle to middle-class parents who are interested in sending their children to urban public schools, and it frustrates their efforts to activate their class resources for the benefit of their children and these schools. These results have implications regarding the importance and effectiveness of parental cultural and social capital in creating lasting systemic change in schools in the face of entrenched bureaucratic structures.

## **Bureaucratic Structures, Middle-Class Parents, and Schools**

Large organizations such as city school districts could not function without some form of bureaucracy. Bureaucratic structures often ensure that rules governing interactions of individuals and allocation of resources occur in an unbiased and standard way without regard to individual social position or attending to individual difference (Weber 1978). Thus, one important feature of functional bureaucracies is the *sense of surety* that results from standardization of rules and procedures. While individual actors in these systems may not like the rules of the bureaucracy, they have a sense of certainty that the rules will be followed and applied consistently. Although the consistency and regulation brought to bear by a bureaucracy can be a benefit to schools, the negative consequence of the consistently often rigid application of the rules is the lack of attention to individual difference. Adherence to rigid procedures that do not take into account individual difference is a common bureaucratic problem.<sup>3</sup> Both the *sense of surety* in the school district bureaucracy and the *rigidity of rules* of the bureaucracy in the case presented here emerged as critical issues for middle-class parents.

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<sup>3</sup>There are many ways in which a bureaucracy may not approach the ideal type of highly efficient administrative organization envisioned by Weber (1978) and can become, as others have noted (Rogers 1968), “sick” organizations.

A compelling body of research has illustrated that middle-class parents desire to customize their children's education in an effort to secure advantage in the educational marketplace and to maintain middle-class status (Ball 2003; Crozier et al. 2008; Cucchiara and Horvat 2009; Horvat et al. 2003; Lareau 2000, 2003; Lareau and Horvat 1999; Lewis and Forman 2002; Reay 2004). This body of research has illustrated both the ways in which these parents' efforts provide a class advantage to their children and how parents have been able to adapt the educational system to suit the needs of their children in their efforts to reproduce social class standing. Often, well-organized, efficacious, middle-class parents are able to effectively influence schools. Findings presented here, however, call into question the degree to which even these formidable middle-class resources can impact on entrenched bureaucratic structures. The data presented here illustrates the limits of these class resources in bringing about change in one school in a large bureaucratic district.

Others have explored the ways in which bureaucracy limits the ability of individuals to impact the system. In 1976, Michael Lipsky argued that negative experiences with street-level bureaucrats<sup>4</sup> might lead people to "withdraw from bureaucratic interaction." Similarly, Hirschman (1970) outlined the options available to consumers unhappy with a firm's products and argued that consumers could either voice their dissatisfaction or exit the system. Here I suggest that these interactions with the district bureaucracy did indeed lead parents to withdraw from the district, exercising the exit option, especially when their efforts to exercise effective voice failed. By presenting data that indicate how middle-class parents experience interactions with the school and district, I move beyond simplistic generalizations about school district bureaucracies. I examine the ways in which the district's policies and practices influence economic integration in urban schools and the district bureaucracy, in particular, focusing especially on the lack of a *sense of surety* engendered by the system and the *rigidity of bureaucratic rules* that led families to exit the system.

## Methods

Ethnographic data were collected over one school year at the Darcy school, a K-8 school with a reputation for being one of the "best" schools in a large urban district in the northeast in the city of Brickton. Located in an affluent neighborhood outside the downtown area, Darcy was selected for study due to the high level of parental involvement at the school and the active encouragement for middle-class neighborhood families to send their children to the school instead of choosing private schools, as would be typical in this city. In order to understand the complex interplay of neighborhood factors, school factors, and parents' motivations, an in-depth study of a single school community was selected.

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<sup>4</sup> Street-level bureaucracies are those bureaucracies in which the individuals in the bureaucracy interact on a daily basis with citizens, have some autonomy, and have the potential for impact on the people served.

**Table 1** Darcy school (serving grades K–8) 2008–2009 demographic information

<i>Racial composition of the school</i>	
<i>Race ethnicity</i>	<i>Percent<sup>a</sup></i>
African American	84
White	11
Asian	1
Latino	2
Other	4
<i>Free and reduced price lunch</i>	
58% of Darcy students qualify	
<i>2008 second-grade Terra Nova results summary</i>	
54% of Darcy second graders scored at or above the national average in reading	
58% of Darcy second graders scored at or above the national average in math	
Total school enrollment: 485	

<sup>a</sup>Percentages are rounded up and therefore equal 102

### ***Research Site: The Darcy School***

Due in part to the long tradition of private and parochial education in Brickton, the public schools do not attract many middle-class families. In the 2008–2009 school year, 76% of the students enrolled by the district were described as low income. Only 43% of the schools in the district qualified under No Child Left Behind as making adequate yearly progress, and slightly more than one half of the district's third graders were proficient in reading. Darcy is similar to these district averages in some respects. Like most other K-8 schools in Brickton, Darcy students are predominantly African American (84%) and poor with 58% of the students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch. However, students are achieving at higher levels than the district averages. The students at Darcy consistently score well above the district average on the state standardized assessment with 54% of second graders scoring at or above the national average in reading and 59% scoring at or above the national average in math. Table 1 is demographic data for the school. Figure 1 contains methodological details.

The population residing in the school's catchment area<sup>5</sup> is far more affluent than the school population. The median home price in the Darcy neighborhood in 2009 was \$200,000, while the median for the city as a whole was closer to \$150,000. Between 50% and 75% of Darcy's 485 students are drawn from the catchment area. Other students come to enroll in the school through the district's voluntary transfer program. These students must apply to attend a school other than their neighborhood

<sup>5</sup> The "catchment area" for a school refers to the geographic region surrounding a school from which students are assigned to attend the school. Students who reside in the catchment area of a school in this city are automatically accommodated at the school once proof of residence is established, usually by providing the school secretary with a gas or electric bill from the residence.

Interview Data Collection and Analysis

Total number of interviews: 32

School personnel (principal, teachers, counselor)	5 (3 Black, 2 White)
Current and former parents	17 (12 middle class; 5 working class; 10 White, 7 Black)
Prospective parents who chose not to send child to Darcy	6 (6 middle class; 1 Black, 5 White)
Parents who sent child to Darcy for a limited time and left dissatisfied with the school	4 (4 middle class; 1 Black, 1 Latino, 2 White)

Observational Data Collection and Analysis

Observational notes were taken during data collection in the field. Within 24 hours, these rough notes were written up into formal field notes. All field notes were analyzed using ATLAS.ti software.

Total hours of school observation: 70

Observational data include:

- Neighborhood surrounding the school
- School yard at drop off and pick up times
- Six Home and School Meetings
- Classroom activities
- School-wide activities such as the spring play and back to school night
- Prospective parent meetings
- School tours and kindergarten open house

**Fig. 1** Darcy school methodological details. Summary of data collected and analyzed during the 2008–2009 school year

school to which they are assigned automatically. The process by which students who live outside the catchment area enroll at Darcy will be explained in detail in the findings section of the chapter because this process bears directly on the role of bureaucracy for parents and students.

Darcy is situated in the midst of a neighborhood with quiet tree-lined streets and large old stone homes. There is a small commercial strip adjacent to the school with a local “organic” market, a coffee shop, and a bookstore. The neighborhood hosts many community events, some at the school, such as the annual Halloween parade. While the majority of the children who live in the catchment area surrounding the school are enrolled in private or charter schools, those who do attend Darcy safely walk to school, with younger children being escorted by parents and older (usually fourth grade and up) children walking alone. The middle-class children who attend the school and do not live in the school’s catchment area typically come from neighborhoods close by, some living close enough to walk to the school. Others are driven by parents or take a school bus. Most live within about a 5-mile radius of the school.

Over the last 9 years, Darcy parents have implemented efforts aimed at increasing the number of students enrolling at the school from within its residential boundaries or catchment area. While these parents often describe these efforts in terms of their desire to make Darcy more of a “neighborhood” school, increasing the connections among neighborhood families with the school, they also are clear that their efforts are aimed at recruiting the more affluent families who reside in the catchment area but choose to send their children to private, charter, or parochial schools. These efforts have included regular monthly meetings held in a current Darcy parent’s home, advertised by the parents in local newspapers and on the Internet, to provide information about the school and provide a space in which prospective parents can learn about the school.

### *Data Collection*

The main methods of data collection for this study were participant observation and interview. Data collection was carried out by the author as part of a three-person research team. The team consisted of two White female university professors (including the author) and one Black female graduate assistant. Our study was designed to understand the motivations of middle-class parents who choose to send their children to urban public schools. The data consist of 32 interviews and 70 hours of observation at the school. Observations were conducted in the neighborhood surrounding the school, at the school yard at drop-off and pick up times, at home and school meetings, during classrooms activities, and during school-wide activities such as the spring play and back-to-school night. We observed at these events in order to see parents and children interacting in the school setting. At times, we carried out informal interviews with parents during these observations. We also observed five evening meetings for prospective parents held at a current parent’s home. These meetings each lasted approximately 1.5 hours.

We conducted interviews with school personnel (5), and current and former parents (17). In addition, because we were interested in understanding the reasons why middle-class parents chose to send their children to the school, we felt it was important to interview some parents who had either considered sending the child to the school and chose not to (6) and parents who sent their child to the school for a limited time and left due to dissatisfactions with the school (4). These parents were all middle class and predominantly White (6 White, 2 Black and 1 Latino). Our sample of 17 current and former parents includes 12 middle-class parents and 5 working class parents; 10 White parents and 7 Black parents. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each interview lasted between 40 and 90 min and was conducted at the school, the participant’s home, or a mutually agreeable location such as a library or a coffee shop.

Our observations and interviews were targeted toward understanding the thinking behind parents’ decisions to send their child to Darcy or elsewhere. As parents’ decisions are made in relation to the choices available to them, it was important for

us to understand these decisions in a contextualized fashion. Thus, our knowledge of Darcy and the school district in which it resides as well as other alternatives were essential as we interacted with parents. Our interviews began by gathering background information from parents such as where they grew up, their occupation, and so forth. We then asked them to tell us about their children and then relate the “story” of how they came to know of Darcy and how they chose a school for their child.<sup>6</sup> For many parents, the telling of this story was quite emotional. They often discussed their hopes and dreams for their lives and that of their children, detailing the kinds of values that led them to make the decision that they did. Several parents cried during the interviews.

### *Data Analysis*

The analysis of data was ongoing throughout the project. The three-member research team met weekly to discuss emergent findings and share insights. Formal coding of the data did not begin until data collection was completed. To begin analysis, the research team coded several interviews separately and then compared their findings. During this first phase of coding, we all began with the same set of codes generated from our initial motivations for the study (such as economic integration and school selection) but allowed codes to emerge from the data as we read and reread it. After a few rounds of coding and comparing coded data, we settled on a coding scheme that included demographic codes, conceptual codes drawn from our theoretical foundation such as social capital, parent experience codes, and codes relating to specific information on the school. The data were then coded using ATLAS.ti.

### **Results: Managing Uncertainty in a Deeply Flawed Bureaucracy**

The results presented below focus on two crucial areas mentioned by parents: enrolling their child and experiences at the school. In both the process of enrolling their child and then subsequent experiences at the school once enrolled, parents experienced a lack of a *sense of surety* that they could trust the procedures in place at the school to provide adequately for their child and a frustration with *rigid bureaucratic rules*. I begin with the enrollment process.

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<sup>6</sup> If parents had more than one child, as many did, the story usually began with their eldest child. It was not uncommon for the second child in a family to simply follow their first to the school selected by parents. However, it was also the case that, at times, parents made decisions for the first child based on the needs of the second or third child. We sought to understand how the family as a system made school decisions for their children.



## *Is There a Spot for My Child? Figuring Out Enrollment at Darcy*

It was not easy for parents to enroll their children at Darcy. District policies and practices presented obstacles for parents living within the catchment area and for those outside the catchment area, with the latter facing the more formidable obstacles.

For families living outside the school catchment area, the enrollment process was characterized by uncertainty and frustration. According to district policy, a school principal must accommodate all children who live in the catchment area, even if they come to register their child on the *first day of school*. Principals must estimate how many children they expect from the catchment area and *then* determine the number of children from outside the catchment area they will register. Middle-class parents desired to register their children in February or March, in keeping with the admission timetables of private schools to which they usually also applied. However, the principal's ability to meet this request was limited. Moreover, parents had to go through the "district process" of filling out a confusing form, sending it in to the district, and usually having their request denied by the district *before* the principal could enroll them. The issue came up many times at an open house for prospective kindergarten parents, as this excerpt from a field observation indicates:

There is a question about class size and registration. The principal says "I will be up front with you"—she goes on to explain how she does not know how many kids she will have until the first day of school and that it could be the case that there will be too many kids.... She says that she can register students up to May 29 and then school is closed until the last 2 weeks of August. "Registration ends May 29 and after that the school is closed. School reopens after the third week in August and we register kids then as well as the first week in September."

When asked how it is decided whether or not an out-of-catchment student will be registered, the principal responds: "principal discretion." This response from the principal is in direct contrast to the printed policy of the district that admission to a school other than your assigned neighborhood school is "based on space availability and selection by the computerized lottery." Parents continued to ask questions about the process. The principal's answers grew increasingly unclear as she attempted to simultaneously reassure parents and avoid making promises she could not keep. This was very disconcerting to parents who were unaccustomed to "dealing with the district."

It was difficult for the principal to express a sense of certainty to out-of-catchment parents as to the chances that they will be able to enroll their child. Moreover, the principal might not be able to actually enroll the child<sup>7</sup> until long after all deadlines for tuition payments for private schools had passed. While there is variation

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<sup>7</sup>In order to enroll a child, parents bring in the required paperwork—the child's birth certificate and proof of residence—and school staff complete district paperwork.

among the private schools in the area, generally a deposit of between \$150 and \$500 is due in March or April to “hold” a child’s spot. Some schools require a legal commitment from the parents to pay the entire tuition of between \$10,000 and \$18,000 a year between April and June. Thus, some parents risk losing a great deal of money if they “deposit” at a private school before they are certain that their child will be admitted at Darcy. The principal has to manage the enrollment numbers at the school to keep the class size as low as possible to please the parents and teachers without letting it drop so low that the district “takes” a teacher away due to low enrollment. District policy mandates that up to 30 children can be enrolled in any K-3 classroom, though, in practice, most principals work with these numbers to maintain classes closer to 25 students in each classroom in the early grades and often enroll classes of 22 or 23 children.

While some families were willing to live with the anxiety created by the process, many were not. A current parent who has been very involved in trying to attract other middle-class neighborhood families to the school describes the experience—which involves a two-tiered process: the formal process implemented by the district and the informal practice employed by the school—from a parent perspective.

So they all [parents who apply to transfer to Darcy] get the rejection letter [from the district], which one year came out in April but usually comes out in May which freaks people out, because they’ve already missed the deadline for a deposit [at a private school]. What they do is they get this letter from the district saying “You’ve not gotten in.” Then they call [the principal] and then she lets them in. And that’s the way it’s been for like the last three years.... I mean, 100% of the people who have entered kindergarten that have gone to our meetings have gotten into Darcy. But when it’s your family waiting until May to get a letter that tells you, you didn’t get in, and then knowing that it’s up to the whim of somebody you basically don’t know, is really aggravating.

Although middle-class parents living outside the catchment area generally had good luck working with the principal as a means of circumventing the district’s formal admissions process, they found the experience precarious and unsettling. Some families were comfortable trusting that the principal would admit their child in late spring and manage the numbers such that their child would ultimately attend a kindergarten class with an acceptable number of students. Many, however, were not, preferring the security (provided by private, parochial, and charter schools) of knowing that their child would have a school to attend in the fall. The following quote is from a parent who initially was very committed to public education but went to look at private schools and ultimately enrolled her son in one. Below, she talks about how the lack of surety she experienced in the early stages of the process influenced her decision to look at private schools:

I was just learning about the process and at one point the principal was saying, well, you know, if you don’t get in through the transfer process—which we did not—come talk to me in, I think she said June. It’s, like, oh! You know, by June I won’t have any other options. And then she said, well, talk to me earlier. But it wasn’t clear. Because it wasn’t a guaranteed thing, we felt like we also needed to look at some other options.

Ultimately, this system of getting a “no” from the district process and having to rely on the principal undermines faith in the system.

Parents are not comfortable with the lack of certainty in the school selection process. It was not clear to parents who the decision-maker is for enrollment—the district office that issues the letter responding to the official student placement request or the principal who ultimately can choose to enroll whomever she wishes using principal discretion. This practice undermines one of the central tenets of good bureaucratic functioning. Rather than parents being assured that the person inhabiting the office in which the decision is being made will uniformly apply the rules of the bureaucracy in an impersonal and fair manner, the process itself raises questions in parents' minds as to the uniform application of rules as well as the understanding as to who or what office ultimately holds authority. While the principal has a strong reputation as an evenhanded administrator who tries to help middle-class families who want to use the public school, the current process both undermines parents' faith in the organization of the district as a whole and the school in particular. In addition, the inability of the school to alter the rules of the system to accommodate families working with private schools is evidence of a second common bureaucratic problem, overreliance on rigid procedures and lack of attention to or responsiveness to individuals. These same themes of uncertainty and a rigid application of the rules are repeated in a different way for families who live within the catchment area who are assured a spot in the school by virtue of residing in it.

Parents who lived within the geographical boundaries of the school experienced bureaucratic impediments related to enrolling their child as well. While these families are technically assured a spot, the Darcy personnel did not engender a sense of surety that a child's paperwork was being handled appropriately. Here one neighborhood parent, who had previously sent her children to private school, describes her encounter at the school:

- Parent: After the Open House I stopped in [to the school office] and I said, "I just wanted to check in with you guys because I registered my son for kindergarten and I just want to make sure that you have the paperwork. Just to be on the safe side and to remind myself what you have and what I still need to bring in." And they [the secretaries] were, like, "Oh. Yeah. We don't have those."
- Interviewer: The forms?
- Parent: His whole file. I just wanted to see his name on the file. Just knowing, you know, because I just don't want to get lost.
- Interviewer: But you're in the catchment area.
- Parent: I know, I know. I just didn't want things to get lost. Because I was, like, "Are we going to ever get anything in the mail?" And someone's, like, "No, you don't get anything in the mail."

This parent continued on to indicate that while she is happy her son will be attending Darcy, the bureaucracy will take some getting used to. After further inquiries, she learned that her son's paperwork was with the school nurse who, for reasons that were unclear to the parent, manages the enrollment process.

Middle-class parents, many of whom have applied to private schools, are accustomed to interacting with institutions, but they also have expectations that

certain standards will be met. For instance, they expect that the office personnel can locate school registration forms and that they will receive some formal written communication from the school prior to the first day of school confirming their registration. These minimal expectations were not met in many cases and led to a sense of insecurity even for parents living inside the catchment area.

### ***Who Will Teach My Child? How Many Children Will Be in the Class? Experiences with “Leveling” and Class Size***

Once children were successfully enrolled in the school, district bureaucracy continued to negatively impact on student and parent experiences. Here again, the uncertainty engendered by the school and district policies presented a considerable obstacle. The most compelling examples of this can be found in the process of “leveling” or creating equal-sized classes in October, and in the ways in which efforts to achieve the district-mandated average class size influenced students’ experiences.

The annual process of leveling is a process by which the district waits until October 15, at which point they know which students will be attending which schools, to reassign teachers and students in order to achieve appropriate class sizes. Thus, a student can be assigned to one teacher’s class on September 5 and spend 6 weeks in that teacher’s class and then be switched to a new teacher on October 15 when classes are “leveled” to create evenly distributed classrooms. This bureaucratic practice had a negative effect on the Darcy community and was deeply troubling for parents.

The negative impact of this bureaucratic procedure became critical for one class at Darcy. Three years prior to data collection, the principal underestimated the number of neighborhood children who would enroll on the first day of school. The principal accepted too many students from outside the catchment area and had 75 children and two teachers for kindergarten. Although school started on September 4, the school had to wait until October 15 for the leveling process to occur before it could get a third teacher. Then students were shuffled around and three classes of roughly 24 students were arranged. Despite the fact that one could reasonably anticipate that this situation would continue to occur in this school for this class as they moved through the school, each year the school was allotted only two teachers for this grade level, and each year the principal and parents had to “fight” to get a third teacher and wait until mid-October for the teacher to be placed and the classes to be leveled. The following field note is from back-to-school night during the last week of September at which the principal addressed the third-grade parents who would yet again be exposed to the district leveling policy:

The principal held the 3rd-grade parents in the auditorium. She started by noting that this class had always been big—“it was 75 in kindergarten, 70 in 1st grade—this year there are 64 kids.” She reviewed district policy regarding the numbers of kids permissible in a classroom and reviewed who she had talked with and announced that they are getting a new teacher. He may be here only one year. They are in the process of deciding who will go into the new classroom. She talked about how some kids had been moved in previous years, and

she would try to avoid moving them, but that she needs to look at gender, race, giftedness, etc. in creating balance across the three classrooms. She said that the new class would have 21 kids in it.... She noted that she has been getting a lot of calls from parents.

Indeed, this situation had a negative effect on students and parents. In the following excerpt, a parent who sent his son to Darcy through the second grade and whose son was in this perennially large grade responds to a question asking him what he liked least about the school. After talking about all of the things he liked about the school including the high-quality teachers and their ability to anticipate the kinds of enrichment his son would need, he said: "I didn't like every year, because of the district budget problems, the first third of the year there's all kinds of questions about what will the class size really be, moving kids around and all that. That uncertainty was unsettling." He goes on to relate that when his son was in second grade, he was placed in a second/third-grade split classroom, and he and his wife realized that in the afternoon when the class was not supported by the reading specialist, there were 33 children in the class with one teacher and that their very bright son:

He would just sort of bury his head in his Harry Potter book and he would just block everything out, which was good in some way. That's how he kind of coped with a lot of noise and craziness and used his free time. But he would neglect anything, any messages that were on the board, anything about homework.... And because there were so many kids, for all his many strengths, you know, getting him to bring a coat home is very difficult, or bringing his book home and his bag home. And so having that many kids and just some chaos was hard for him. And so that whole situation of uncertainty year to year.

The uncertainty related to class assignments and class size created by the bureaucracy was a common frustration for these parents. The following year, this family enrolled their son in a nearby private school. Another parent called class size "a huge concern." She wondered aloud in the interview about class size and teacher retention:

Were they going to be able to keep this class size down? With public schools, always turnover and movement are concerns because they seem to have less control over that than, say a private school. So you have this nice team of teachers. Are they going to stay there? Are they going to stay in those grades? Are they going to retire? You know, so many things. And even leadership, you know, the administration or the principals, it just seemed less solid.

For other families like this one, the sense of uncertainty surrounding their child's education at Darcy was a reason enough to leave the school. Another parent noted that in addition to class size, he too had concerns about the consistency of teacher quality:

I also know the kind of movement mobility there is among the teacher corps.... There's a lot of mediocre and poor teachers in the public schools, especially in urban environments. And their mediocrity has been protected, and in some ways rewarded. And it's a bunch of crap.

In addition to managing the leveling process and working to attract and retain good teachers, the principal has to constantly manage enrollments to get class sizes just right in order to maintain classes that are large enough but not too large. If she has a class size of 22, it is likely that the district might force her to create a split class

with, for example, one-half first graders and one-half second graders. The following conversation with the principal regarding how she decides how many students to admit illustrates the principal's efforts to maintain reasonable class size and consistency in the midst of the district bureaucracy. I asked her how she managed enrollment:

I look at numbers and budget and what the school district is giving me. Because I get my budget in March, February or March, and I don't want to start getting 30 or 40 kids in the kindergarten class and have no money for those children. You know, to buy supplies and stuff. So it's not as easy as [a parent] makes it sound. I try to be accommodating, but sometimes I just can't do it. I mean, I really learned my lesson from this 3rd grade class when I had 75 kids. And I just overdid it. I was too zealous, I took too many people.

One parent who sent her daughter to the school for kindergarten and first grade details how the adherence to strict class size regulations and the inability of the district to adapt to fluctuations in enrollment affected her child and ultimately was the last straw in their decision to leave and enroll their daughter in a private school. Here the parent tells her story:

Then she went to 1st grade, she started 1st grade. It was 35 kids in the class. So they needed to do something about that right away. So they took 10 kids out of that 1st grade and put them in a 1st–2nd split. So Natalie got put in the split. And that's where things started going downhill. I think the teacher had taught like 6th grade before and I don't think she had a lot of experience with young kids. I felt like these kids were being treated like 2nd graders. And they did pick kids that were sort of quick academically. But I felt like she was treating them like 2nd graders. You know, like the first week Natalie came home with like a 20-word test, spelling test.... Beginning of 1st grade. She had never had a spelling test. I don't think they have spelling tests in kindergarten if I remember correctly. You know, she did very poorly. First of all, I didn't think she should be having a 20-word spelling test. She had never had a spelling test. She was an awful speller, that wasn't her strength. But that was just indicative of this was not developmentally appropriate.

As this parent indicates, the adherence to strict rules regarding class size did not allow the school to make a decision that would have been developmentally appropriate either for her daughter or probably for many of the other first graders in a first/second split class. The principal bemoans the way in which she is forced to make these decisions regarding numbers in her classrooms. She has a good relationship with the district officer in charge of staffing but refers to the process as a "game." She says:

It is so scary. It's a game. It's a game.... I get such terrible stomach pains from this. I start looking at it when I get my budget, when I know how many teachers. And I just constantly let [the district person in charge of staffing] know what I'm going to need and what my anticipation is.

The management of this issue with the district bureaucracy consumes a great deal of the principal's time and energy.

Parents were ineffective in efforts to keep class sizes low and to change the disruptive leveling process. Despite letters to the district headquarters, phone calls, and outrage, they were unable to change these policies. While others (Horvat et al. 2003; Lareau 2003) have documented the considerable power of middle-class parents to

leverage their significant reserves of social and cultural capital to benefit their children and navigate school systems, these parents appeared to be ineffective. This ineffectiveness raises questions regarding the power of middle-class parents in the face of entrenched bureaucracy. The middle-class parents we studied were not willing to change the system nor were they willing to put up with the uncertainty and heartache for their children created by these policies. They did, however, exercise options of leaving the district by sending their children to the many excellent independent schools in the area or leaving the city altogether by moving to nearby suburban districts.

In many respects, Darcy is a good inner-city public school. Students are achieving at much higher rates than the district norms, students generally feel safe, and the teachers at the school are by all accounts of generally high quality and have been stable over time as has the principal. There is a palpable and widely shared culture at the school that focuses on high achievement and common courtesy toward others. We saw children hold doors open for one another and visitors to the school without being asked to do so. We watched as the entire school community participated in the spring musical production and celebrated the success of the effort. And yet, despite these many highlights and positive experiences, most middle-class parents in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the school do not choose to send their children to Darcy. Middle-class parents from outside the neighborhood catchment area were pushed away as well. We found that the uncertainty related to core aspects of teaching and learning—the ability to actually enroll one's child in the school, class size, developmentally appropriate practices, and uncertain teacher quality—pushed these parents away. These aspects of life at Darcy were deeply influenced by the bureaucracy of the system. While, in many instances, school leadership, especially the principal, and current parents tried to mitigate the negative effects of district bureaucracy, their efforts proved to be no match for this entrenched bureaucracy.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Middle-class parents bring valuable resources to schools. They provide pressure and demand accountability from teachers and administrators in ways that are distinctly different from working-class and poor parents (Lareau 2003). They also bring significant resources in the form of social capital (Horvat et al. 2003) and financial capital (Kahlenberg 2001). Also and importantly, middle-class parents are often more able to devote considerable amounts of time to their children's school. The resources of middle-class parents are significant; so too are their expectations. Most of the middle-class parents that we studied were unwilling to tolerate the uncertainty and dysfunctional nature of the bureaucracy at Darcy.

The middle-class parents we observed and interviewed for this study come with their own expectations regarding interactions with an organization or institution. These parents are accustomed to interacting with professionals and institutions and are also accustomed to having their expectations met. When their high expectations are not met, they are accustomed to being able to change the system or institution to

meet their demands. Darcy parents were frustrated by the lack of a sense of surety that their child could enroll in the school and receive what parents considered to be an adequate education. Parents were also frustrated by the rigid application of bureaucratic rules. Lastly, they were unable to effectively activate (Lareau and Horvat 1999) their class resources to effect desired change.

The admission process at Darcy is riddled with uncertainty and confusion. Once enrolled at the school, uncertainty regarding class size and placement in developmentally appropriate environments drove parents away. Our research focused on key aspects of the enrollment process and school experience that were deeply upset by district bureaucracy. Efforts to make urban public schools more user-friendly for middle-class parents need to recognize that meeting middle-class parents' expectations in these key areas is critical if they want to enroll and retain middle-class children. Until urban school districts can organize themselves to meet the basic requirements for middle-class parents, including an acceptable level of security that the core functions of the school will be effectively carried out, they will continue to be, as one parent in our study referred to them, "the schools of last resort," enrolling only children whose parents see no other option, and the vast resources of these middle-class parents will be lost.

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# Symbolic Constructions, Pedagogical Practices, and the Legitimation of All-Day Schooling from a Professional Perspective: Tendencies Towards Familialization in All-Day Schools

Till-Sebastian Idel, Kerstin Rabenstein, and Sabine Reh

With the development of a modern, universal school system in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, a modern pattern of family developed: the nuclear family that focused on personal relationships and intimacy and on emotionality within a caring child upbringing (Gestrich et al. 2003; Sieder 1987). From the very beginning, disputes on the functions of school and family accompanied this process that, as is well known, Parsons and especially Luhmann describe as the process of functional differentiation (Luhmann 2002, pp. 111–141; Parsons 1968; cf. also Tyrell 1985; Wernet 2003). Hegel (1811/1995) underlined the educational function of school as an institution of transition that imparted societal demands to children and teenagers, thereby viewing school as an “outpost” of society oriented towards subject matter and achievement that reaches right into childhood at home (Benner 1995, p. 52). Pestalozzi (1976), on the other hand, regarded the familial, emotional life of the “living room” as a model for any form of institutionalized education and thereby as the essential precondition for pedagogy.

Since then, the relationship between family and school has remained precarious, be it in practice (e.g. the ways in which practitioners working in state schools and families

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engage with one another) or in discourse (e.g. the debate surrounding whether schools should take over functions from the family and how emotional the teacher–pupil relationship can legitimately be). The introduction of all-day schooling in Germany is currently presenting new challenges to this relationship (Allemann-Ghionda 2005).

In this chapter, we present selected results of the videoethnographic research project *LUGS* (learning culture and instruction development in all-day schooling) carried out at 12 schools in three German federal states (Berlin, Brandenburg, and the Rhineland Palatinate) between 2005 and 2009 (Kolbe et al. 2008, 2009; Reh et al. 2011). The project explored how all-day schooling is transforming school practice. To what extent do learning cultures at school, professional pedagogical practices, and processes of subjectivation change due to the expansion of school hours to cover the whole day? We argue that pedagogical activities in all-day schools are shifting in several ways that can be theorized collectively as a *shifting of boundaries*. Extended time spent at school, meaning more time spent together, decreases the—in terms of structural functionalism—specificity of how actors present themselves at any given time. It also decreases the specificity of what can be observed by others and increases the informality of interactions. This chapter examines such a shifting of boundaries from the perspective of a change that, at least on the surface, seems to indicate a familialization of school life. Based on the actors' interpretations and constructions of the school–family relationship collected within the project, it first describes the discourse about familialization in a school. In a second step, the chapter looks at pedagogical practice and shows where, how, and to what extent familial practices expand into all-day schools. The final section concludes with a comment from the perspective of “school theory”.

## Symbolic Constructions of Familialization

During the exploratory phase of the research project, we conducted problem-oriented, narrative interviews with pedagogical actors at the selected schools (principals and educators engaged in all-day activities) in which we asked them to tell the story of their school (Kolbe et al. 2009). Based on these narratives, we were able to reconstruct patterns of interpretation concerning the meaning of all-day schooling. These patterns, in which the professionals attribute specific social functions to all-day schools, can be described as “symbolic constructions of all-day schooling”. They are part of organizational sense-making, that is, part of the organization's discourse about itself that contributes to maintaining the regulation of the individual school. This reaches into pedagogical work as part of practical knowledge in a way that always has to be clarified empirically and that, in turn, receives essential impulses for its reformulation from school practice.

What is noticeable about these symbolic constructions is that they are employed by the actors primarily to legitimate the introduction of all-day schools despite the

relatively broad consensus about the necessity of all-day schooling in Germany today. Apparently, the pedagogical actors feel compelled to justify the break with the German tradition of half-day schooling and the extension of school's temporal "grip" on children and teenagers. The interviewees primarily resort to the rhetoric of progressive education and its culturally pessimistic deficit discourse; they operate with compensation schemes of schooling. Their central pattern of interpretation is a version of the progressive educational figure of the shifting of boundaries between school and life. In brief, this interpretation suggests that extended (i.e. all-day) attendance at school can be justified if school becomes something completely different, if it offers an all-embracing "de-schooled" learning, if it postpones the boundaries between school and life, and if it overcomes—at least partially—the artificiality of school and thereby compensates various deficits that prevail inside and outside of school.

Especially within primary schools and the schools for children with special educational needs (which were included in the LUGS study and are partly situated in disadvantaged areas), symbolic constructions offer culturally pessimistic devaluations diagnosing the failure of the family. The school is thus seen as a space compensating for this failure, that is, it seems necessary to familialize school. Within the context of an ambivalent image of the family as both decaying structure and idealized myth, extended time at school can be justified if school turns into what families should be, but fail to be. As one principal points out in an interview: "for I think that's one aspect, too, that here at our location it does many children good as a deliberate dissociation from what awaits them at home, in inverted commas, misery at home or idleness". Another principal mentions "desolate circumstances" in the families and that children "should feel comfortable at school during the afternoon" (cf. in more detail, Fritzsche et al. 2009).

Two varieties of familialization are distinguishable in these symbolic constructions. First, a moderate form in which the school compensates for parents' educational deficits. It aims to compensate for the lack of cognitive stimulation at home by providing a substantial educational afternoon programme that adopts the informal learning opportunities of leisure time and simultaneously turns leisure into schooling. In this concept, school becomes a compensatory "family substitute" that enters the domains of extracurricular learning usually provided by the families and that seeks to improve the teenagers' cultural capital.

Second, a more far-reaching familialization of school takes place when schools, particularly primary schools, gain in importance as "surrogate families". School is to be a form of all-embracing community. Whereas the first variety construes all-day school as incorporating pedagogically framed, meaningful leisure activities that enable children to compensate the deficits of an educational milieu with little stimulation at home, the second variety of familialization conceptualizes school as a caring and supporting counterworld in which children can also get the emotional affective attention that is assumed to be, or is indeed, denied to them within the family.

## Familialization as a Form of Appearance in Pedagogical Praxis

In our understanding, symbolic constructions are created as part of “doing organizations” in the broadest sense. They are rooted in, and develop from, organizational work and practices; they maintain a school’s daily routine.

The construction outlined above thus raises the question of the extent to which it, that is, the familialization of school, is accompanied by corresponding practices on the level of pedagogical work between educators and pupils. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, the *LUGS* project explored this question. The results of its videotaped participant observation in the field indicate that the constructions elicited in interviews parallel the pedagogical practices whose legitimization they serve. Familialization on the level both of discursive constructions and of pedagogical practices, as observed mainly in primary education, is marked to different degrees in various schools, but a tendency is clearly recognizable across the entire sample of schools observed in this project.

To summarize, we present an “inventory” of familialized practices and pedagogical arrangements. Each in its own way contributes to dissolving the distinction between public and private affairs that has been shaped historically and established socially through *inter alia* the institutionalized separation of school and family:

1. Practices that observers, as a rule, recognize as specific and common practices of the familial field, such as preparing meals for the children, clearing various things away for the children, tidying up, organizing various activities and appointments for the children, reminding them of and helping them with daily tasks, or satisfying corresponding needs (getting dressed, going to the toilet, etc.), but also the cultivation of sociability and community outside of lessons or classrooms. Therefore, some schools invoke eating lunch as a ritual of the middle-class nuclear family. The pupils gather in small groups to eat their lunch together with the teachers at laid tables decorated with candles and flowers. The meal is not served in portions on the plates as in a cafeteria, but bowls are placed on the table or put there by the partaking teachers for everyone to reach. All pupils have their own linen napkins and a self-made napkin ring with their name. All start and finish the meal together. They then brush their teeth in the classroom.
2. “Scattered” practices that are not necessarily typical of a specific field because they can be found in many contexts at school as well as at home—such as reading—and that are usually framed differently at home than at school but now occur in a context of home life within the school, for example, reading while lying on a mattress. A room arrangement serving this purpose can be the “carpet corner” that pupils can only enter without shoes, in which they are allowed to rest, play, and withdraw, but that can also be retransformed into a setting for instruction.
3. Practices in which a special (also physical) closeness arises between teachers and pupils, “education by hand”, in direct confidential conversation or educators paying direct attention to pupils, in providing physical comforting, but also in taking hold of pupils’ personal belongings. Establishing closeness to pupils is observable in practices of hugging, for example. We videotaped discussions

in which teachers suddenly take pupils into their arms without any of the pupils being surprised at all.

4. Practices in which pupils are allowed and expected to present themselves not only specifically as achievers at school but also possibly as “whole persons” (at least with and within other activities) and in which they are addressed accordingly (e.g. playing, resting, “dawdling”, “playing about”), for example, when time outs from instruction are established in which teachers and pupils play together. These practices take place—another aspect of familialization—in specifically created spaces of learning, in spatial arrangements that refer to the familial through a homelike aestheticization. As in progressive alternative education, various artefacts give a homely atmosphere to the classroom. Pupils’ artwork hangs on the walls; the CD player provides soft background music. The room appears divided into different territories and zones; traditional seating arrangements have been replaced by movable desk assemblies; tables are more than functional workplaces, sometimes they are provided with table decoration; and so on.

From the perspective of professional or educational theory, it is essential to note the ambivalent effects crucial for the constitution of the pupils that emerge in these familialized practices of all-day schools. For this purpose, our analysis explores the performative dimension of teacher–pupil practices, that is, the forms of “addressing” within pedagogical practices. The focus is on how educators and pupils in turn address each other, how they assign positions to each other, and thereby make one another into quite specific others. They make each other into those subjects who can then take part in the given interaction or practices.

The fact that and the extent to which this pedagogical addressing is ambivalent can be illustrated by a small scenario, an interaction between third-grade Michael and his teacher. Central here is the practice of tidying up the satchel. In the “old world” of half-day schools, this was considered a “motherly” caring practice. It was habitually performed in advance at home, and as such, the school could expect it to have been done in advance. It was thus a practice by which the parental home secured the child’s readiness for school.

During a period of seatwork, Michael is sitting at his desk searching for something in his satchel. The teacher (female) approaches him and initiates a situation in which she empties Michael’s satchel and tidies it. Initiating her practice, she herself refers to the situation as one in which she wants to offer help, that is, a situation in which help is needed, without Michael having asked her for help before or during her act of helping. Gradually, the teacher takes the lead in the interaction while Michael takes part more or less as observer or someone who follows her directions. By and by, she empties the satchel and tells Michael to put things from his satchel onto a shelf. When she takes a drinking bottle out of the satchel, she asks him if this is still from the previous day, and when she finally empties the satchel into the classroom dustbin, she asks Michael if he wants to keep a fir cone that drops out of the satchel. Several times, Michael looks into the camera. Perhaps these glances are not only an expression of his shame about, on top of everything else, being filmed in this unsuitable situation; perhaps these are also glances to ensure the third party, the camera, is made into a witness and an ally filming the teacher’s border violation.

The teacher’s performance not only “extracts” a familial practice into school and frames it anew within the school context; simultaneously, the parents are—indirectly or implicitly—depreciated, for example, in the comment about the drinking bottle.

Overall, the scene is ambivalent in its meaning. On the one hand, it expresses the care that takes place in a compensatory substitution of the parental home and, indeed, opens up chances because it seeks to enable Michael to continue working. On the other hand, however, it is this supportive care that turns Michael into someone who needs support; this needy position is made for him to take up and to confirm.

The help, which Michael can hardly refuse, serves to rapidly produce his fitness for work; it is inserted into the regime of school time and its expectations of achievement. In precisely this regard, the act of help differs from that within the family. Michael is being addressed as an untidy, badly organized pupil who cannot help himself and therefore has to expose himself to help in order to remain addressable.

The pedagogical norm expressed in this situation, that is, the legitimacy of an act of help that places the satchel as a piece of private property under the teacher's control, is acknowledged by Michael's subordination. In his readdressing of the teacher, he submits himself; in between, he unsuccessfully raises a protest once when the teacher announces she will now empty the satchel. All that is left to him is quiet protest and the possibility of a meaningful glance into the camera.

On the one hand, one might summarize, the teacher's practice puts Michael into the position of a pupil who is in need of help and badly organized, and simultaneously reproduces this position during the performance of the scenario; on the other hand, it makes him fit for work, enables him to continue working on his task. Seen in an abstract way, educational disadvantage caused by a lack of parental concern for school affairs is being compensated in this miniature of compensatory help, and at the same time, in an act of transformation, educational disadvantage is being maintained precisely because it is staged anew.

Comparing this scenario with one at another all-day school, the challenges become evident. As part of the regular practice of "open beginnings", the teacher welcomes all arriving children separately and watches them settle in while she ensures that things are put away, shoes are stored in their place, slippers are put on, and satchels are placed into their compartments after the required materials have been taken out. One satchel remains standing in the middle of the room. The teacher asks whose it is and approaches the pupil in question. He uses the opportunity to show her that his slippers are damaged. She takes a close look at the shoes and suggests that his mother should buy new ones; to this end, she puts the shoes into the satchel. This action addresses the pupil as forgetful. Seeing the shoes in the satchel, he will be reminded to ask his mother to buy a new pair, or else his mother will become aware of the damaged shoes when she looks into the satchel.

In both scenarios, positions are opened up for pupils who are not very well prepared for their work, who do not find or have at hand all they need to start their work. These are subject positions of a forgetful or a badly organized pupil. In both scenarios, the offer of such a subject position, the process of being addressed as such a pupil also has a performative effect. And in both scenarios, the mother becomes the object of the teacher's statements. Both times, there is a clear conceptualization of the kind of preparatory work the family, in the latter case the mother, should provide for the school. But the teacher in the second scenario—the distracted practice of tidying up framed anew within the school

context as the preparation that simply has to be done before starting to work—is responsive to the pupil who has a close look at his own work equipment. In the first scenario with the pupil Michael, “help” must be imposed because otherwise he cannot continue his work. One pupil receives an assignment for his mother; for the other, the implication is that his satchel is tidied up—neither by himself, nor by his mother. Whereas one teacher takes over the familial task herself, the other pupil becomes the middleman in a request to the mother. While one satchel is being emptied, the other is being packed.

Difference linked to educational disadvantage—which pupils are able to get down to work quickly and efficiently and which are not—is simultaneously staged and confirmed: you are allowed to look at your shoes together with me while I have already given your smart classmate a demanding additional task. By first staging (i.e. framing anew and differently) familial practices at school, the spectrum of what becomes relevant at school changes and expands. To a certain extent, one might say that those practices that are submitted to the logic of school are precisely those that become significant for the production of the distinctions that are relevant for assessment and selection. Options for differentiation become more complex; opportunities diversify in how to recognize children as pupils, to position them in regard to each other, and to rank them according to their achievement potential. The demand on professional educators thus increases: they will need to observe this extension, consider the effects of their own practice, and most importantly, reflect on the ambivalences.

## Conclusion: School Theoretical Commentary

The shifting of boundaries observed in the LUGS research project arises almost automatically when pupils and professionals spend more time together at school provided this time does not simply translate into additional standard lessons, which is hardly thinkable due to the concerns of German pedagogical discourse. The boundary shifting outlined here is not at all a familialization of school that would shift the logic of school in its essence. Rather, we argue that the process of familialization is leading to an *increase of school-related issues and practices*. The content of this school matter is what is shifting. From a school theoretical point of view, the “logic” of school is the universalism of achievement (Wernet 2003). The responsibility for being in the best shape to solve particular tasks and problems is, however, increasingly assigned to individuals themselves. The individual is held responsible and has to learn to be responsible for him or herself.

The ability to conduct oneself appropriately in this sense—and a neoliberal society seems to rely on the subject having these kinds of abilities (Bröckling 2007; Miller and Rose 1990)—under the conditions of changing family constellations, increasing social inequality, and the related precariousness of life, simultaneously depends on the production of such subjects within an open, increasingly informal school. The contingency of subject formation is being contained by, inter alia, being entrusted to school work that is extended onto the whole day. At least, all-day



schooling with its modern learning cultures seems better placed to make it easier for pupils to form themselves into self-managing learners. It should be clear that although this process cannot be celebrated wholeheartedly as liberation for all, it also cannot simply be condemned as a colonization of the *Lebenswelt*. Biased assessments of the way schools are changing as they shift to all-day schooling underestimate the complexity of these processes and their effects: for instance, the familialization of school that we have outlined in our observations and case studies here.

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# Parents' Perspectives on Services to Support Families in All-Day Schools

Nicole Börner

Taking the “open all-day primary school”<sup>1</sup> (OAPS) found in North Rhine-Westphalia as an example, this chapter deals with all-day schools as places for integrated services that serve to support families. In doing so, it focuses on the perspective of the addressees, who in this case are the parents. More concretely, I investigate how parents view the integration of measures to support families, that is, what kind of advantages they see in consolidating various services, but also whether they have reason to fear such a consolidation of services. In the following, I begin by delineating the empirical basis of this chapter. Next, I shall take up the current scientific debate by looking at families in the midst of social change as well as the development of integrated provisions intended to support families within all-day settings that serve the education, care, and upbringing of children. A short introduction to the situation in North Rhine-Westphalia will be followed by the empirical part of this chapter that elucidates parents' views on the degree to which they accept the services created to support families at open all-day primary schools in North Rhine-Westphalia. The findings will be summarized in the conclusion.

## Empirical Foundations: Accompanying Research on the Open All-Day Primary School in North Rhine-Westphalia

The empirical basis of this chapter is the study “Accompanying Research on the Open All-Day Primary School in North Rhine-Westphalia” carried out on the *Land* [federal state] level. The study is a cooperation between four research institutions,

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<sup>1</sup>“Offene Ganztagschule im Primarbereich.”

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namely, the research alliance German Youth Institute/Dortmund Technical University (*Forschungsverbund Deutsches Jugendinstitut/Technische Universität Dortmund*), the Institute for Social Work (*Institut für soziale Arbeit e.V.*), the NRW Social Education Institute (*Sozialpädagogisches Institut*) of Cologne University of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschule Köln*), as well as the University of Wuppertal (*Bergische Universität Wuppertal*). The project began with a pilot study (conducted 2003–2005) that was expanded into a substantial study (2005–2007) and ended with an in-depth study (2007–2009). This chapter is based on the latter.<sup>2</sup> Each of the individual studies comprised a number of focal points. For the in-depth study, these were (a) head teachers and all-day school coordinators, (b) teachers and specialists, (c) parents, (d) children, and (e) the bodies responsible for maintaining the schools. This chapter is based on research on focal point c, namely, parents.

The focal point “parents” aimed, amongst other things, to elucidate possibilities for families and schools to cooperate more closely in terms of educating and raising children. An important set of questions was geared towards working with parents, and in particular, offering advice and support on all matters regarding the development and upbringing of children. The research design of this focal point was a combination of three different empirical approaches to the field. These were qualitative group interviews with parents, a postal survey of parents, and expert interviews (see Fig. 1).

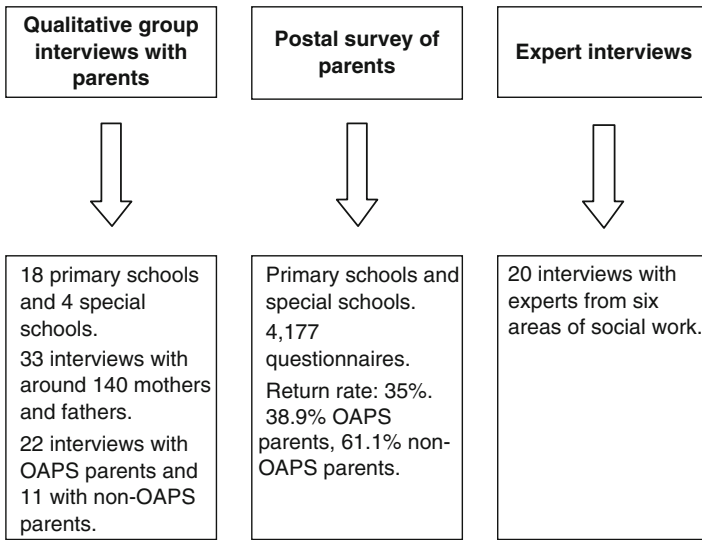
This chapter is based on data from the qualitative group interviews conducted with parents between 2007 and 2009. Interviews were conducted with parents whose children attended open all-day schools (“OAPS parents”) as well as parents whose children did not attend open all-day schools (“non-OAPS parents”). Groups were put together by the heads of schools, who had been asked to create heterogeneous groups of parents (with regard to gender, social, and cultural background) whenever possible. Furthermore, groups were to include parents who had taken advantage of advice and support services if these were offered at their particular school. The interviews followed a topic guide. Field research was carried out between November 2007 and June 2008. Three to six parents took part in each interview; OAPS and non-OAPS parents were interviewed on separate occasions. All in all, 33 group interviews were carried out at 22 open all-day schools. Of these, 22 interviews were conducted with OAPS parents and 11 interviews with non-OAPS parents. Altogether, 140 parents were interviewed, amongst whom mothers were overrepresented compared to fathers.

## Families in the Midst of Social Change

Recognition of the fact that families play an important, if not the most important, role in the development of children and adolescents is not new. For a long time, families were assumed to be internally stable, self-regulating systems (cf. Rauschenbach 2009,

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<sup>2</sup>The accompanying research into all-day schools in North Rhine-Westphalia is being continued within the scope of the project entitled “Educational Reporting on All-Day Schools in North Rhine-Westphalia” (*Bildungsberichterstattung Ganztagschule NRW*) ([www.bildungsbericht-ganztag.de](http://www.bildungsbericht-ganztag.de)).



**Fig. 1** Research design and sample of the focal point “parents” (Source: Accompanying Research on the Open All-Day Primary School (OAPS) in North Rhine-Westphalia; own figure)

p. 114) that would naturally take care of themselves. Ever since the publication of the Seventh Report on Families by the Federal Government (BMFSFJ 2006), however, it has been widely acknowledged that this assumption is untrue. Rather, families need to be maintained, and family members need to accomplish this task anew on a daily basis. This has lately been dubbed “doing family” (cf. Lange and Alt 2009; Schier and Jurczyk 2007). The sobering results of the first PISA study (at least in public opinion) as well as the recent accumulation of cases of child neglect and child abuse have created a consensus that not all families command the necessary resources to actually maintain a family. On top of this, parents are confronted with growing social demands when it comes to their efforts to raise and educate their children. At the same time, living conditions of families have become more challenging. This includes, among many other examples, the diversification and increasing differentiation of family forms and structures, the blurring of the boundary between work and private life, higher poverty risks, the democratization of families and the trend for parent–child relationships to become more informal, as well as the erosion of social networks and collective patterns of orientation (cf. Jurczyk et al. 2009; Rauschenbach 2009; Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2005). Even if there is no reason to speak of a “state of emergency regarding our children’s upbringing,” as one can frequently read elsewhere, supporting families is an essential ingredient to secure the opportunities for the future of children and youth.

## **Integrated Services in All-Day Settings to Support Families in Educating, Looking After, and Raising Children**

Policymakers have been pursuing several different strategies to support families in Germany. Apart from allocating financial benefits (such as child benefits, child support) and expanding the childcare infrastructure, a number of innovative measures have also been introduced in the realm of social pedagogical support for families. One example is the integration of family support services in standard institutions. The decentralization of services and their establishment in the everyday world of clients was based on the hope that access thresholds to traditional services of youth welfare and family education would be lowered (cf. Stöbe-Blossey 2008). The goal of this low-threshold strategy was to win over even those families considered “hard to reach.”

All-day preschool and school settings that educate, look after, and raise children were a good starting point for this endeavour. They are able to provide additional resources such as more time and better opportunities to cooperate with external partners, all of which can ease the integration of family support services. Additionally, children and youth spend increasingly more time in these institutions, so that the latter continue to become more significant in terms of shaping the everyday life of families. Because (almost) all children and youths attend formal childcare or schools during the corresponding phase in their lives, the chances of reaching parents are potentially higher.

When it comes to the integration of family support services in standard institutions, it is imperative to link together existing institutions that have so far supported children, parents, and families independently from one another. On the one hand, formal childcare services and (all-day) schools exist as standard institutions. On the other hand, there is a plethora of social pedagogical support providers. Both realms are increasingly being turned into “linked, integrated, multifunctional services that are bundled under one roof or at least provided by a single provider” (Heitkötter et al. 2008, p. 12, translated). A look at the discourse and the developmental status quo in Germany, however, shows that the debate tends to focus on the foundation and expansion of Parent–Child Centres (alternatively called Family Centres or Mothers’ Centres) or Multi-Generation Houses (cf. Diller et al. 2008). Regardless of which term is being used, or which concept underlies a particular institution, these cooperative hubs usually centre around a nursery and develop into such inter-generational institutions. In some cases, Community Educational Centres for Families serve as the “basic institutions” (Rauschenbach 2008, p. 151, translated). An initial stocktaking of the German Youth Institute from 2004 was able to identify four main kinds of service offered to parents in such institutions: advice, parenting education, mutual exchange/encounters, and, finally, services geared towards the integration of migrants, including assistance for entry into the labour market and language classes (Diller 2005, p. 10).

In contrast to the above-mentioned provisions, the integration of family support services into all-day schools is still a marginal phenomenon. The expansion

of all-day schools was based on the hope that this would create services to support families (cf. Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006). Cooperation with youth welfare services is more often than not a defining element of these institutions. Nonetheless, there is very little empirical evidence on whether all-day schools can and will be turned into institutions to support children *and* parents. It seems to be considerably more difficult to establish family support services at all-day schools than at childcare institutions. Comparing the starting points of the two institutions might provide us with reasons for this. Both childcare institutions and schools share the fact that a majority of children today attend a nursery (in 2008, 94.1% of all 5-year-olds attended a childcare institution) (Bock-Famulla and Große-Wöhrmann 2010, p. 185), just as most children attend school due to the laws on mandatory school attendance. Traditionally, childcare institutions are rather close to the support provided by youth welfare and family welfare services. On the one hand, this is established in the Child and Youth Welfare Law (8th Social Code). On the other hand, cooperation is eased through providers who are often involved in both realms of social work.

In contrast, schools and youth welfare services look back on independent historical developments and are based on divergent legal foundations. Their relationship continues to be characterized by tensions and problems. As a consequence of the PISA debate and the expansion of all-day schools, however, new forms of cooperation have emerged between schools and youth welfare services (cf. Mack 2009). The main tasks of the cooperation partners centre around working with pupils rather than working with parents (cf. Arnoldt 2007). Formal childcare institutions and all-day schools are places in which children and youths spend longer stretches of time—often several years. Significantly, however, formal childcare is not compulsory, whereas school attendance is mandatory. Both institutions have an educational mandate. Yet, formal childcare is neither about performance assessment nor about selecting children according to ability. This is still different for schools. Last but not least, the trust between parents and each institution is different. The comparatively strong, continuous, and personal ties between parents and nursery staff have been described as a “structured relationship of trust” (Rauschenbach 2008, p. 151, translated), whereas for the above-mentioned reasons, the relationship between parents and schools is often difficult and troubled by conflicts (cf. Krumm 2001). As a result, circumstances differ regarding the integration into the respective institutions of family support services, which necessarily also come into contact with and possibly intervene in the private sphere of families.

## The Situation in North Rhine-Westphalia

The *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia has placed great emphasis on linking family support services with the aim of easing families' access to advice and support services (cf. Schäfer 2009). This political guiding principle on the *Land* level was manifested in several different areas. The most prominent and most developed

model is the *Land* programme “Family Centres in North Rhine-Westphalia,” in the course of which 3,000 out of currently 9,500 childcare institutions are to be turned into so-called family centres by 2013. Most cooperation partners come from the realms of family counselling and family education (cf. MGFFI NRW 2009; Schäfer 2009). The *Land* initiative does not limit itself to the preschool age bracket, however. North Rhine-Westphalia has been a pioneer in the expansion of all-day schools, and these equally aim to support parents in raising their children. For example, in 2006, a circular on the expansion of the OAPS read: “It [i.e. each OAPS] offers comprehensive education and childrearing services that are geared towards the individual needs of children and parents. It also aims to strengthen families’ own childrearing competencies” (MSW NRW 2006, passage 1.1, translated). Later on, the circular reads: “The open all-day school... supports parents’ work–life balance and their efforts in raising their children” (MSW NRW 2006, passage 1.2, translated). Likewise, the current decree on all-day primary schools and all-day middle schools characterizes “support services for parents such as advice on how to raise children, general advice, and participation” (MSW NRW 2010, passage 3.1, translated) as part and parcel of all-day schools. Furthermore, cooperation with child and youth welfare services is a defining element of all-day schools and particularly primary schools in North Rhine-Westphalia.

So far, no reliable data are available on the prevalence of advice and support offers in all-day schools. A survey amongst parents conducted as part of the accompanying research of the OAPS was able to yield initial estimates. Parents were asked which kind of support services they knew of that especially addressed parents and that were offered in schools. It turned out that such services were rather unknown amongst parents at the time of the survey in 2008. Whereas more than one-half of the parents knew about orientation events on child development and raising children, only a few parents had heard about actual counselling sessions, so-called parents’ coffee hours, or classes for parents (cf. Börner et al. 2010).

## **Acceptance of Family Support Services in Open All-Day Primary Schools in North Rhine-Westphalia**

The integration of family support services into the open all-day schools is being carried out in the hope that these bundled services will be better able to reach families. In light of the often quite problematic and conflict-ridden relationship between parents and schools, one cannot assume, however, that these new services are necessarily actually accepted by parents. In some instances, offering these services in schools can result in higher thresholds compared to services offered by external specialists. In order to find out whether parents tend to accept or reject such new forms of service, parents were questioned about these issues in group interviews. The focus was on provisions relating to family education and family advice, including informational events on topics such as development, childrearing, and so-called parents’ coffee hours and courses for parents. Furthermore, questions were discussed

that centred around consultation hours and counselling offers on childrearing and family matters. In the following, I shall discuss what reservations parents may have when it comes to extending family support services or establishing all-day schools. I shall then identify those positions that are more open towards such approaches.

***Parents Are Against Such Offers Because...***

They do not see the need for integrating family support offers into all-day schools and because they consider families and childrearing to be entirely private matters. As a main argument both in favour of and against such services, parents often express the simple *lack of a need for such services*. This can be captured on three levels: the individual level, the school level, and the local level.

Arguments that relate to individuals or schools are based primarily on the fact that parents do not feel any need for professional help in matters of childrearing, education, or family matters—either for themselves or indeed for the entire body of the school’s parents. Based on the positions taken by the respective parents, one can identify three main assumptions and aspects leading to this conclusion. First, it is assumed that making use of counselling for family matters or questions of child rearing must necessarily be induced by problems in the family. That is to say, the need for support is defined as stemming from a specific problem that requires solving. Yet, second, in all instances available in the collected material, parents were unable to identify any such problems, either amongst themselves or amongst the rest of the parents. Third, and possibly in juxtaposition to the second aspect, parents do not wish to be stigmatized as a “problem family”—regardless of whether problems do or do not exist.

In addition, these parents name two more arguments to underline that there really is no need for such services. On the one hand, they believe that such services are offered in abundance already, so that there is simply no perceived need for any additional services.

German quote	English summary
<i>Wir haben andauernd Fortbildungen. Ich müsste das jetzt nicht unbedingt mehr haben. Mutter, O18-D</i>	<i>We are constantly receiving further training. I don't think I need any more of that right now. Mother, O18-D</i>

On the other hand, some parents doubt that integrating family support services can be successful and regard the idea with great scepticism. In their view, the genuine target group, namely problem-ridden families who “need those things,” cannot be reached easily anyway. Therefore, they see no need to expand family support services at all-day schools. This argument relates directly to schools.

German quote	English summary
<i>Die es am Nötigsten haben, kommt man sowieso nicht ran. Mutter, O9-A</i>	<i>You can't reach those who need it most urgently anyway. Mother, O9-A</i>



At the same time, the need at the local level is currently defined not by the existence of problems, but rather by the available local infrastructure. Parents see no need to link services at all-day schools when they consider the diversity and quantity of local services to be sufficient. These parents appear to be well informed about local support structures and are of the opinion that the already available portfolio of services requires neither expansion nor restructuring.

The concept of “schools as places of learning for children” describes the second pattern of reasoning. Parents’ main argument here is that schools should be fundamentally oriented towards children’s formal learning experiences. These parents regard schools, even if they are organized as all-day schools, as places that belong to children and whose work should focus entirely on children. In this view, families and in particular parents are not the intended addressees of schools. These parents fear that extending schools’ responsibilities by providing services for parents could mean that resources available for the education and support of children may be reduced.

German quote	English summary
<i>Für mich ist eine Schule was, was den Kindern gehört. Ich habe dann immer so Befürchtungen, dann wird dann hinterher jeder gebildet, nur die Kinder nicht mehr. Mutter, ON20-A</i>	<i>For me, a school is a place that belongs to children. I am a bit afraid that, in the end, everybody will be educated except the children. Mother, ON20-A</i>

The third line of reasoning may be described in terms of a notion of “*childrearing as an entirely private matter*.” The defining assumption is that schools are quite simply not responsible for supporting families. For this reason, these parents do not find it appropriate to consolidate structures related to family counselling and education at all-day schools.

German quote	English summary
<i>Ich find', die Schule hat da nix mit zu tun. Mutter, O3-B</i>	<i>I think it's none of the school's business. Mother, O3-B</i>

This kind of reasoning also encompasses other arguments that declare issues of childrearing to be an entirely private matter. Protecting privacy is clearly the top priority here. These parents do not wish to bring questions of childrearing into schools, just as they have no intention to open up in front of other parents—many of whom are strangers to them.

German quote	English summary
<i>Und ich glaube einfach, dass so gewisse Dinge wirklich so in vier Wänden bleiben sollten und nicht vor `ner großen, breiten Masse dann auch noch besprochen werden sollten. Mutter, O3-C</i>	<i>And I simply think that some things should be dealt with behind closed doors and should not be discussed openly in front of big crowds. Mother, O3-C</i>

These parents feel that schools are already taking up a major role in their family lives. They feel that there should be a life outside of schools, and locating family

education within schools would run counter to this. A central feature of this kind of reasoning is that parents conceive of the balance of power between families and schools as uneven. Parents fear that they or their children will be stigmatized if they take advantage of professional services located within the schools whenever they encounter family problems. They are afraid that in addition to determining the education and life chances of their children, schools may also assume a bigger role in their private lives.

German quote	English summary
<p><i>Ich finde das gehört nicht in die Schule. (...) Und wenn ich jetzt die Schule, jetzt noch mehr einbinde in dieses Elternhaus, dass die Schule im Grunde auch Einblick bekommt mehr, wie ist der Hintergrund. Ja, nicht dass dann—jetzt mal krass gesagt—nachher heißt: “Wenn er aus dem Hintergrund kommt, dann kann der noch so klug sein, da geht er mir lieber auf die Hauptschule, weil das wird eh nix!” Mutter, O9-F</i></p>	<p><i>I don't think this is the school's business.... And if I allow the school to take on an even bigger role in the family, and it gains more insight into my private matters, what will be the result? Well, quite frankly, in the end, I don't want people to say that, you know: “If this guy comes from that background, then no matter how smart he is, he should rather go to the lowest track secondary school, because, in any case, this is all wasted on him!” Mother, O9-F</i></p>

### ***Parents Are in Favour of It Because...***

They believe that the integration of family education and family advice services into all-day schools will also create better opportunities for children, parents, and families. On the whole, family education is more accepted than family counselling. Parents who are open to integrated family support benefit the most from *lower access thresholds*. They appreciate shorter distances, and the fact that primary schools in particular are usually located in the vicinity of families' homes means that services can be reached more easily. “Shorter distances” may equally describe the fact that take-up of support services has been made easier through structural changes. Compulsory school attendance means that schools are automatically an integral part of family lives. Parents are frequently seen at schools; they know the institution and the school staff. Parents emphasize that they trust teachers and support staff in all-day schools and that this can lower thresholds and heighten the acceptance of support services. Although parents tend to be rather unfamiliar with specialist support services and (at least in the beginning) find it hard to understand how they work, they find schools easier to deal with.

German quote	English summary
<p><i>Wenn man jetzt nich` diese weiten Wege hat, vor dieses riesige Rathaus muss, oder so. (...) oder wo auch immer man hingehen muss, wenn die vielleicht hier sitzen würden, wär's vielleicht für manche schon einfacher. Mutter, N4-A</i></p>	<p><i>For some people, it really would be easier if they were sitting here and if they didn't have to walk so far and go to this huge town hall, or the like... or wherever one always has to go. Mother, N4-A</i></p>

Specialists are at hand, and trusted people are able to facilitate finding contacts. Additionally, youth welfare services and other public services are normally strongly associated with state control. For some parents, this is more problematic than opening up towards schools in terms of their private lives.

German quote	English summary
<i>In 'ner Institution, die gleichzeitig Kontrollfunktion hat, da wird nie Vertrauen aufgebaut werden. Das kann nicht funktionieren. Mutter, O2-B</i>	<i>You are never going to trust an institution that is also supposed to control people. That just won't work. Mother, O2-B</i>

Parents believe that schools are able to support them insofar as school staff may recognize any difficulties so that the school and the parents can jointly search for a solution or the appropriate support. Here, teachers and specialist staff are seen first and foremost as mediators, as trusted key people.

According to the interviews, a second important aspect that eases the acceptance of integrated family support services among parents is the view that families and schools are fundamentally and jointly responsible for childrearing. These parents no longer stick to the above described traditional view that separates responsibilities between families and schools. They no longer declare childrearing to be an absolutely private matter but feel that schools have a duty to raise children as well.

German quote	English summary
<i>Also, ich finde, dass dadurch, dass die Kinder jetzt nicht nur bis mittags in der Schule sind, sondern bis nachmittags, die Schule ja auch noch mehr Einfluss auf die Kinder hat, und der Auftrag der Schule sich nicht nur darauf beschränken kann, denen Wissen zu vermitteln, auch den Umgang miteinander, so. Irgendwie haben die mehr Einfluss auf die Kinder dadurch, dass sie mehr Zeit mit denen zusammen sind, und da werden Erziehungsfragen automatisch wichtig, und die sind wichtig in Einklang mit den Eltern zu machen, und da muss es Absprachen geben, dass beide an einem Strang ziehen. Mutter, O9-G</i>	<i>I think that now that the children are no longer in school just until noon but have to stay there until the afternoon, schools have even more influence on children, and that their duty is not just to impart knowledge but also how the children should relate to each other. Somehow they have more influence on children because they spend more time with them, and that automatically makes childrearing issues more important, and it is important that these be brought in line with those of the parents, and they need to agree on these issues so that everyone is working together. Mother, O9-G</i>

Children move within both worlds: in families and in schools. Parents believe that family problems have an influence on children in schools as well, and therefore, they regard families and childrearing as part of the school's tasks. Having open all-day schools is viewed positively because specialist staff, often nursery teachers, have been trained to provide support and generally have closer ties to family education. Likewise, the fact that staff at all-day schools get to know children in a more private setting rather than just in the classroom is viewed positively. Moreover, parents hope to broaden their social contacts and exchange ideas through family education services. Family education settings as group-oriented events play a leading role here.

They provide parents with the opportunity to make contact with other parents and enable them to gain insights into their children's everyday environment. At the same time, groups offer opportunities for parents to exchange experiences with other parents who are in the same circumstances and who have to deal with similar problems. Parents hope to gain valuable insights and hints that will help them in their everyday lives and in solving specific problems. The fact that support is offered by specialist staff is seen as a further benefit.

Finally, from this perspective, family support services are also seen as a *chance to support one's children*. Some parents point out that supporting parents and working with parents will have a positive effect on children as well. They feel that supporting children occurs in many ways, not exclusively by "directly working with children."

German quote	English summary
<i>Ich denke, für die Schüler ist das immer von Vorteil, ist das immer gut. Wenn die Eltern mitziehen, umso besser. Mutter, N7-B</i>	<i>I think that this is always an advantage for pupils, that is always good. If parents go along with it, even better. Mother, N7-B</i>

## Summary

The integration of family support services in full-time schools aims to improve support services for families. This model aims to lower thresholds to traditional means of support and hence to reach more families. However, the success of this strategy depends crucially—among other factors—on parents' acceptance of these provisions. In this chapter, I have examined how parents judge the integration of family support services into open all-day primary schools. A central finding is that it is impossible to assume the existence of a particularly high or low acceptance from the outset. Instead, individual patterns of orientation and attitudes guide the respective positions on these issues. The main frame of reference that can be identified for these individual positions is the dichotomy between traditional and modern ideas regarding the question of childrearing responsibility.

The traditional understanding is based on the idea that parents are solely responsible for childrearing and that this and other family matters are an entirely private affair. Schools as public institutions are not seen as being responsible for such questions of childrearing in general. This view is augmented by a bundle of different expectations: On the one hand, parents have certain expectations of themselves; on the other hand, society and schools confront them with more expectations. As a consequence of this interplay of sole responsibility and external expectations, parents are afraid of failure (cf. Nave-Herz 2007, p. 75). In light of the uneven balance of power between family and schools (cf. Busse and Helsper 2008, p. 480), this fear of failure is accompanied by worries that family problems could influence the assessment of their children's performance and thus their opportunities in life.

In contrast, a modern view of who is responsible for childrearing sees raising children as a task that should be accomplished jointly by families and schools. As a result, parents feel less under pressure, and there is a higher degree of trust between parents, on the one hand, and teachers and specialist staff on the other. In the end, parents are more open with regard to school matters.

To summarize, when raising children is perceived as a joint task, chances are higher that parents will openly communicate any problems they may have to others outside the family and that they will make use of support services integrated into schools. The degree to which family support services are generally accepted depends as much on the relationship between families and schools as it does on parents' views of their own educational role and on the external expectations they anticipate regarding their childrearing practices. A realignment of the relationship between families and schools is essential in order to increase parents' acceptance of these services. The expansion of all-day schools seeks to contribute to these kinds of adjustment (cf. Züchner 2007). In this context, expanding partnerships in the field of childrearing and education are discussed as a promising way forward (cf. Soremski, this volume).

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# Parental Involvement in All-Day Special Schools for Learning Disabilities

Michael Urban, Kapriel Meser, and Rolf Werning

## Parental Involvement and the Relation Between Family and School

One important dimension of the relation between families and schools can be found in parental involvement. Relatively neglected in wide parts of the German school system as well as in the discourses of the German educational sciences, it is a topic receiving greater attention in the international context. Conceptualizing the family–school relation primarily from the side of the school, it focuses on ways of involving the parents in the processes of education and participation in school. A lot of research has confirmed the importance of parental involvement, particularly with regard to its relation to educational success (Ferguson 2008; Jeynes 2011; Jordan et al. 2002).

One influential theoretical model of parental involvement has been put forward by Epstein. It has been applied in a major part of the educational research studying this dimension of the family–school relation. Epstein and Sanders (2000) differentiate six forms of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, learning at home, volunteering, school decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parenting includes all those activities of the school that aim to support the parents in their parental function. Especially, parental trainings and different forms of guidance and advice are meant by this form of parental involvement. Communicating addresses

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the flow of information between school and family and vice versa. Learning at home describes the involvement of parents in the school-related learning of their child that takes place at home. This includes direct support in the form of monitoring homework and exercises and should be seen in relation to the families' opinions and beliefs concerning the relevance of school and education. Another form of parental involvement can be found in the volunteering, commitment, and activities of parents in the school. This means activities such as selling coffee and cake at school festivities or accompanying school excursions. School decision-making comprises the participation of parents in the processes of decision-making as based broadly on legal conditions. And the last form of parental involvement, collaborating with the community, highlights the participation of parents in the networks the school is involved in on the local level. This comprises, amongst others, partnerships with local associations and companies, social service providers, and so forth.

In general, Epstein (1995) provides a more or less harmonizing view on the relation between school and family. Nonetheless, it is also possible to understand her approach of describing the school–family relation through the conception of parental involvement as a theoretical perspective affiliated primarily with one side of this relation. It focuses on the family–school relation with the aim of describing the different dimensions of direct and indirect participation and collaboration of parents in the educational processes of their children in the school system. The schools' activities of reflecting and intervening in the field of parental involvement can be understood as an attempt to optimize their educational functioning and their effectiveness by mobilizing this additional resource for backing and supporting the students' learning processes. The counterpart of this systemic interest can be found in parents' strategic interests in exerting influence on the academic success of their children by different means. But there is some uncertainty regarding whether these forms of strategic parental activities are conceptually covered by the theoretical model of parental involvement that places more emphasis on the benefits of collaborative relationships.

Although constructed primarily in correspondence to the school systems' perspective, research based on the paradigm of parental involvement has provided detailed information on the general importance and specific effects of different facets of parental involvement. Especially, the meta-analyses conducted by Jeynes (2003, 2005, 2007) have demonstrated the enduring effects of parental involvement on students' academic achievements. These effects could be proved for elementary and secondary education as well as for students of different races and different socioeconomic status. The literature review presented by Henderson and Mapp (2002) also underpins the close relation between educational success and parental involvement.

There exist some convincing hints that a more detailed view on the effects of different forms of parental involvement has to be applied. As Pomerantz et al. (2007) have distilled from their examination of the relevant research, not every form of parental involvement is always linked to academic achievement. Especially, forms of home-based involvement such as assisting with homework can be associated with lower performance at school (Pomerantz et al. 2007, p. 378). Also, the increase of parental involvement at school can be related to rising social and behavioral problems (Pomerantz et al. 2007, p. 397). Following a similar line of argument, Hill and Tyson have pleaded for a more detailed view of parental involvement. In their



meta-analysis of the effects of parental involvement on academic achievement, they also found that unless parental involvement of parents at middle schools in general has a positive relation to achievement, there exists a negative relation in the case of help with homework (Hill and Tyson 2009, p. 757). Interestingly, these authors summarize an important layer of this research with one relatively abstract category: academic socialization, understood as “communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility, linking school-work to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, discussing learning strategies with children, and making preparations and plans for the future” (Hill and Tyson 2009, p. 742). This seems to be the most influential dimension of parental involvement in the middle school context (Hill and Tyson 2009, p. 757).

Even if this conceptualization of academic socialization highlights the notion of actual parental actions, it recalls more elaborated concepts of socialization that can provide an understanding of specific limitations to the model of parental involvement. The processes described as parental involvement take place on the surface of a complex concurrence of multiple factors. The concrete means of parents accompanying their children’s learning processes—may they be home-based or school-based—rest on enduring attitudes, habits, and dispositions (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1979) and intergenerationally transmitted educational orientations within the families (Büchner and Brake 2006) that cause effects long before children enter school. The conditions of primary socialization in the family also exert a major influence on the development of school-related competencies in detail along with the general genesis of those kinds of habitus formations that allow a good fit with and a successful utilization of the educational provisions of the school system. Alongside this kind of effects of primary socialization, discussed at least since Bernstein’s (1971) distinction between elaborated and restricted code, the families’ educational orientations, their habitus formations, and their milieu-related endowments of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1983; Vester 2006) also build the background for the specific strategies and capabilities of action parents use in their relation to school. As described by, for example, Lareau (2000, 2003), such strategies and capabilities are strongly tied to socioeconomic conditions, and concepts such as parental involvement afford a perspective that allows one to reflect on the bonding between parents’ experiences related to a specific sociostructural positioning and their styles of realizing the monitoring of their children’s education.

But it is not only the side of the families that needs to be examined in a differentiated way. The forms in which schools are operating the task of parental involvement can also be studied with respect to existing differences between single schools considered as organizational systems. Important advice that supports an understanding of the importance of this dimension of the family–school relation can be found in Kramer and Helsper (2010). These authors have analyzed organizational cultures in schools and have been able to describe different types of school culture in their relation to habitus formations. So-called institution–milieu complexes (Helsper 2006) are used to reflect on different possible combinations of primary habitus formations shaped in the family and secondary habitus formations requested and processed in school. Secondary habitus formations are developed in relation to the primary habitus, and their more or less strong correspondence leads to varying patterns revealing a good or

poor fit. The importance of this model stems from the possibilities opened up by relating differences on the sides of the families, which are here conceptualized theoretically mainly as differences resulting from milieu memberships, and differences bound to the organizational cultures of distinct schools. This is a theoretical perspective that seems to be promising for the analysis of school systems in general but that might reveal its specific potentials if applied with regard to a school system that, like the German school system, is internally structured by the allocation of schools to different levels of competence. The conceptualization of Kramer and Helsper (2010) points to a perspective on schools that allows for the interrelation of differences between school types and schools understood as individual organizations. This is of importance not only for the relation between primary and secondary habitus but also with regard to the question of parental involvement.

Even though parental involvement can be considered as a kind of ephemeral process taking place on the superficies of the deep-rooted and persistent powers of the interplay between school structures and habitus formations, it possesses its own and specific theoretical and practical relevance. This relevance results from the fact that parental involvement describes the dimension of the actual interaction between school and family systems. Even if related to and widely depending on the predominance of the underlying structural relations between school and family, it is that dimension in which it becomes possible to transform the concrete relations between families and schools. Especially if these relations are characterized by distance and annoyance, parental involvement creates the possibility to work on this complicated relationship. The conceptualization of parental involvement as a specific type of organizational program in school creates the opportunity to systematically implement a collaborative relationship between school and families and alter disadvantageous modes of interaction. Therefore, the question whether this kind of organizational program exists in a school or not, and how relations to parents are designed, is of great interest.

The literature review provided by Boethel (2003) illustrates the importance of this dimension of the family–school relation particularly for specific groups such as ethnically diverse or poor families. As, for instance, Crozier (2005) and Crozier and Davies (2007) have disclosed, there exist important disadvantages for students of color in the British context, and, in some cases, the schools' attitudes and practices addressing them and their families have to be considered as forms of institutional racism (Crozier 2005, p. 596). Similar ways of dealing with ethnically diverse families have been described in, for example, the German context by Meser et al. (2010). Auerbach (2004, 2007) reports on the benefits that arise for students from families that migrated from Latin America to the United States when schools start to establish communicative settings that are welcoming this group of parents and allowing them to articulate their perspectives on the family–school relation and their modes of supporting their children. In this regard, it also seems to be promising to analyze the attitudes and organizational programs schools apply in steering their relation to their systemic environment.

These considerations lead to a research agenda on parental involvement that does not ignore the effects of stable and enduring structures within school systems as well as in family systems on the interrelation of these systems and on the feasibilities of establishing productive forms of cooperation. A main strand of the analysis of

parental involvement can be found in the differences that exist in managing the task of parental involvement on the level of the single schools as organizational systems. Here, it can be of use to apply a systems-theoretical conceptualization of the relation between school and family. In terms of social systems theory (Luhmann 1995, 2002), the relation between families and schools can be described as a relation between autopoietic systems. This theoretical perspective highlights the difference between these systems. Families and schools are understood as systems constituting themselves by different operational logics. And the idea of the autopoietic constitution of the system always implies that the system's process of self-producing coproduces the distinction between the system and its environment. Hence, the relation between family and school can be understood as the relation between two system–environment relationships in which every system mutually looks at the other as part of its own environment. In this theoretical model, parental involvement becomes a twofold phenomenon. On the one hand, it can be understood as the program of the organizational system of a school that is used to address parents. This includes the idea that the means used to realize parental involvement are means that also allow the observation of the families in the system's environment. These forms of observing family systems are connected with general assumptions about parents and families, and the more sophisticated the paths of parental involvement are, the more detailed the knowledge and understanding of the families might be, and the greater the chance to overcome reductive and stereotyping views of the families. By involving parents in communication, parental involvement also provides the only chance for the school systems to exert an influence on the families. On the other hand, the systems-theoretical perspective underlines the circumstance that families as well as parents cannot be reached directly by the school system's operations. They decide within their own communicative operations in which form they relate to school systems and how they interpret the school systems' attempts to gain parental involvement. Research on parental involvement therefore also has to reflect on the systems differences that can be found in the respective observations of the other system and on the relation between organizational discourses about parents and the concrete communicative realization of parental involvement.

## **Family–School Relation and the Potentials of All-Day Special Schools for Learning Disabilities**

The research project “Potentials of all-day special schools (focus: learning) regarding the optimization of the relation between family and school”<sup>1</sup> can be located in the context of this research agenda. It explores the question of parental involvement in a small segment of the German school system that is characterized by some specifics.

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At first, special schools for students with learning disabilities are a differentiation in the German school systems that links the provision of special needs education to the segregation of these students from mainstream schooling. This is a process that can be considered as the exclusion from regular schools of students with special educational needs in the field of learning. Very often, it is accompanied by conflicts and annoying experiences for the students and their families. As Gomolla and Radtke (2002) have shown, this segregating process is not free from forms of institutional discrimination. Students from families with a migration background (Diefenbach 2007; Kornmann 2006; Wagner and Powell 2003) and from socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Werning et al. 2008; Wocken 2000) are strongly overrepresented in this type of school. For these reasons, parental involvement in the context of special schools for students with learning disabilities is structurally confronted with burdens in the family–school relation, and the implementation of instruments of parental involvement by school systems of this type always has to anticipate the possibility of resulting problems.

Furthermore, the organizational form of all-day school is not very common in the German context. In the last decade, great endeavors have been made to enlarge the quota of this organizational form (Holtappels et al. 2007). One important discussion in this context concerns the question of which impacts an all-day form of school will have on the relation between families and schools (cf. Soremski et al. 2011). Whereas most of the literature appreciates the enlarged opportunities of all-day schools (Holtappels 1994; Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006), some authors describe the transformation in the family–school relation caused by the implementation of all-day schools in a more critical way. If the school integrates social forms that are traditionally specific to families and also places leisure time within the context of the pedagogical aims of the school, this might lead to new and forced forms of influence on the students. They become subjected to processes of socialization that address them not only in the role of a student but also as a whole person (Kolbe et al. 2009). With regard to special schools for students with learning disabilities, the question arises as to how the conception and realization of the all-day relates to the school systems' images of the families in their environment, and which potentials and problems therefore arise in school systems' practices of parental involvement.

## Research Questions, Design, and Methods

The specific aims of the research project “potentials of all-day special schools” were to gain a differentiated understanding of the ways in which all-day special schools for learning disabilities operate their relations to the family systems in their environment. Which constructions about these families are communicated within the organizational systems of this type of school? Which interplay can be found between this kind of constructions about the families and the design of the all-day provision? How do the schools use the possibilities of parental involvement, and are

they able to exert an influence on the home-based dimension of parental involvement? And what are the perspectives of the families? Is there a correspondence between the school professionals' and the family members' views?

The research was based on a qualitative research design using focus groups (Lamnek 1998) with teachers, social workers, and principals in 18 special schools for learning disabilities in Lower Saxony. All schools had at least 2 years experience with the all-day organizational form. Discussions in focus groups were transcribed and then analyzed with qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000). Results have been integrated into the description of four types of relating the organizational form of all-day to parental involvement and the configuration of the school systems' relationship to the family systems in its environment. Episodic interviews (Flick 1997) with 9 teachers, 16 parents, and 17 students were conducted in a second research stage at four schools. Each school represented one of the described types, and the interviews allowed the integration of family systems' perspectives into the study. Interviews were also transcribed and then analyzed with thematic and open coding (Flick 2004; Strauss 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The results presented here are based mainly on the focus groups and concentrate, first, on the paradigmatic images and constructions about families and parents in each of the four types of schools and, second, on the relation between these constructions and the conceptualizations of the all-day organizational form and of parental involvement.

## **Different Forms of Parental Involvement in All-Day Special Schools for Learning Disabilities**

### ***“In Former Times, Parents Were a Bit More Interested”: Compensation in the All-Day School as an Alternative to Parental Involvement***

This school is characterized by a nearly complete abandonment of parental involvement. The explanation given for this is a lack of interest on the side of the parents. Professionals in this school do not express any doubt that the responsibility for the absence of the parents' participation in educational processes—in school and at home—is to be found in the attitudes and habits of the parents. Whereas in former times, some interest in the school had still been visible, an increase in apathy and disregard led to the actual situation characterized by the parents' noninvolvement. In the view of the school professionals, this can be understood as a cumulating effect of the intergenerational transmission of a family culture of noncaring. Things get worse from generation to generation. The descriptions of the families are deficit-oriented if not pejorative, and this form of constructing the image of the family in the environment of the special school for learning disabilities is amalgamated with the justification for the absence of parental involvement and the reluctance to change this. For example, there seems to be no reason for home visits, an instrument of

parental involvement that is generally used relatively frequently in the context of special education.

English summary	German quote
<p>I do not practice home visits myself. I wouldn't know... what effects this should have. For most of them, it would be embarrassing.... It always sounds good, but I really don't know what kind of positive effect this should have. Apart from knowing how it looks like there. But as I said, we know, and the other students also know, what it looks like there, because, well, it's just their underclass niveau. (Teacher c)</p>	<p>Ich mache selber keine Hausbesuche. Ich wüsste jetzt auch nicht, (...) welchen Effekt das haben sollte. Den meisten wär das peinlich (...) Das hört sich zwar immer gut an, aber ich wüsste jetzt wirklich nicht, welchen positiven Effekt das haben sollte. Außer, dass man weiß, wie's da aussieht, aber wie gesagt, wir wissen das ja, die anderen Schüler wissen's auch, wie das da aussieht. Weil, das ist nun mal ihr Unterklasseniveau. (Lehrkraft c)</p>

Deficit views on parents like this might lead a school to the conclusion that is necessary to compensate this lack of parental interest through the means of the school and to undertake the task of a sophisticated monitoring and support of the individual students' learning process. But this is not the case at this school. A second conviction to be found in the communicative construction within this school is the belief that educational successes in the sense of completing school with a basic secondary graduation cannot be attained by the school itself. The educational process can only be successful when there is strong parental support. This school seems to be facing a dilemma. It is not astonishing that the specific form of conceptualizing the all-day provision in this school neither concentrates on involving the parents nor on supporting the learning processes in the students. The aim of a supplementary provision in this all-day school can be found in the inclusion of informal and nonformal learning processes within the school, in support in the field of social and emotional learning, in physical education, and in the wish to teach the students to use their leisure time in a structured way.

### ***All-Day School as the Better Family: School's Colonialization of the Family Lifeworld***

In this school as well, it is a deficit-oriented view on the families that dominates. All in all, parents are described as reserved and overstrained. Some of the descriptions are pejorative in an open and direct form. The critical ascriptions concern different areas and range from failing forms of home-based support for the children's learning processes in the school, across questions of basic deficits in parental care, to specific topics such as missing parental responsibilities in the field of sex education in puberty. These negative descriptions of the family systems in the environment of this school are closely related to a self-description of this school as a kind of family substitute—a self-description that in different phases of the focus group holds a strong overtone clarifying that the school understands itself as the better alternative to the broken homes their children are stemming from.

English summary	German quote
<p>But I've also got the feeling that the teachers... are undertaking much more there, also of childrearing responsibilities than the parents... A great number of rules and structures are given here. And in the family, hardly any. There, it really is the case that the children tend to be neglected. In a bodily respect, that is in their whole appearance, their diet, we've got very many fat children... and, well then, when they enter puberty, the whole development, sexuality, and so... here, a lot is happening with the teachers. Sometimes, I even have the feeling that this is a small family... the teachers with their students. (Social worker b)</p>	<p>Aber ich hab so auch mit das Gefühl, dass die Lehrer (...) viel mehr da übernehmen, auch an Erziehungsaufgaben, als die Eltern ne? (...) sehr viele Regeln, Strukturen hier halt auch gelegt werden. Und in der Familie wenig. Da ist es dann wirklich so, dass die Kinder ja eher verwahrlosen. Was körperlich betrifft, also in ihrer ganzen -- ähm, Äußerlichkeit, was das Essen betrifft, wir haben sehr viel dicke Kinder... und äh, ja dann auch so dieses äh, ja wenn sie in der Pubertät sind, diese ganze Entwicklung, so Sexualität und so (...) dann läuft hier schon mit den Lehrern ganz viel. Ich hab da schon so manchmal das Gefühl, dass es so 'ne kleine Familie, (...) hier ist, die Lehrer mit ihren Schülern. (Sozialpädagogin b)</p>

The organization of the all-day school is in line with this understanding of the relation between school and family. Even if there are also some provisions in the field of vocational preparation, the main character of the all-day provision supports the idea of family compensation. Students should experience guided forms of leisure and the school as a place in which it is possible to have fun without the pressure of learning. Another important aspect with regard to the superseding of family structures lies in the use of the all-day provision as a space for pedagogical relations and conversations with the students.

These features are similar to the school described before. But a great difference can be identified on the level of the concrete handling of the relations to the parents. This school does have intensive forms of addressing parents. One main form of parental involvement applied in this school is a kind of intervention in the families. Teachers and social workers from the school interact with parents in a similar way to practices known from social care work. Even if performed partly in a supportive mode, there are also some forms of intervention that exert a great pressure on the families, especially when practiced in collaboration with youth welfare services, clinics for child and youth psychiatry, or family courts.

### ***On a Par with the Parents? The Competence-Oriented Special School with Great Interest in Parental Involvement***

The images of families and parents provided by teachers and social workers at this school are based on interest and respect. The school professionals are aware of the fact that very many of the families in the environment of the special school for learning difficulties experience forms of social marginalization and stressful living conditions. This school's knowledge about the families' social situation and their problems does not lead to a view emphasizing the deficits of parents. On the contrary, in most of the cases, a good acquaintance with the families' struggles

corresponds with acknowledgment and respect. This includes an understanding of the structural burdens that strain the family–school relation in the context of the special school for learning disabilities, and it is part of the normal repertoire in this school to actively work on the bad experiences parents have already made with the school system.

English summary	German quote
<p>Well, with some parents it certainly was difficult to break the ice at first. Well, they had already gathered negative school experiences with their children. But especially in such cases, the principle of “reaching out to the parents, visiting the parents at home, and getting them on board” has proven its worth.... By an active form of parental involvement ending in cooperation and not in: We are the teachers and we know what needs to be done... but taking the path together with them. (Teacher b)</p>	<p>Also bei manchen Eltern war sicherlich durchaus anfangs das Eis zu brechen, also sie hatten schon negative Schulerfahrungen mit ihren Kindern gesammelt, aber gerade da bewährt sich auch dieses Prinzip ‚Auf die Eltern zugehen, die Eltern zu Hause besuchen und sie mit ins Boot holen‘. (...) Das eben durch eine aktive Elternarbeit, die dann eben in der Kooperation mündet und nicht darin: wir sind die Lehrer und wir wissen wo es lang geht (...), sondern den Weg gemeinsam mit ihnen zu gehen. (Lehrkraft b)</p>

The work with parents tries to reach out to them as equal partners, and it is based on the use of a great variation of settings and methods.

In correspondence to this general mindset, the conception of the all-day school also does not stress the failure of the parents to provide care and opportunities to their children. Specific possibilities offered to the children in the all-day school such as sports or leisure activities are also understood as an aid to the families that otherwise would not be able to afford them. The most important aspect of this supporting orientation may be the importance attached to the aim of enhancing the students’ learning processes and helping them to obtain a qualified school-leaving certificate. In contrast to the two special schools for learning disabilities described before, this one is capable of realizing this objective for a great proportion of its students. Derived from the relevance that the support of the learning processes holds in this school in general, the use of the all-day organization also centers on the enlarged opportunities to individualize the students’ learning support and to enhance their achievements.

### ***Neither Fish nor Fowl: Rudimentary All-Day Without Relation to Parental Involvement***

The last type of relating the organizational form of all-day to parental involvement and the configuration of the school systems’ relationship to the family systems in its environment is characterized mainly by an only rudimentary realization of the all-day provision. This has the effect that it is not possible to find a stringent connection between the images and the constructions about the families or the practices of parental involvement on the one side and the conceptual considerations about the



all-day organization on the other side. The school representing this type expresses an interest in amplifying the importance of the all-day provisions and accentuates that the potentials of all-day schools could best be used if the whole school were to participate in the all-day organization. Even if the school has not been able to realize such a target until now, it already practices intensive forms of parental involvement in a cooperative mode. As in the school described before, the perspectives on the families do not concentrate on deficits, and the objective of helping students to gain qualified school-leaving certificates is also of major importance.

## Conclusion

The different forms of conceptualizing and realizing parental involvement in the organizational context of the all-day school are important in two regards:

First, these results support arguments that question whether parental involvement is positive per se. The differences between special schools for learning difficulties in this study demonstrate that disparities are to be found with regard to not only the existence of specific forms of parental involvement but also the quality, intentions, and effects of their implementation. For example, the collaboration with the community may be of benefit to the families, but it might also be realized as a concerted control aiming to discipline the families.

Second, within a relatively small sector of the school system, the specific type of the special school for learning difficulties organized as all-day school, there are very different forms of realizing this kind of school. The individual school systems' constructions about their own objectives and their self-conceptions as well as their perspectives on the family systems in their environment are very important conditions in respect to the concrete forms of operating the all-day school, of shaping the direct and indirect forms of interaction with the families, and of parental involvement. And, last but not least, the targets for the use of the all-day in special schools reveal a direct relation to the convictions school professionals hold on the students and their families.

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# Educational or Child-Rearing Partnerships: What Kind of Cooperation Is Needed at All-Day Secondary Schools?

Regina Soremski

## New Implications of the Family–School Relation as a Partnership

Family and school belong to the main socializing instances of our society. However, their relationship is characterized by tension, and partnership in particular is not a matter of course. There are historical as well as structural reasons for this. They refer to the development and establishment of the school system since the eighteenth century and to the professionalization of teaching. In this context, the role of parents as educators was questioned increasingly (Oevermann 2006, p. 78; Tyrell and Vanderstraeten 2007, p. 165). Today, there are even reports of a growing dominance of the school over the family that is taken to be an effect of the different social logics in the two systems (Helsper et al. 2009, p. 36).

Despite these tensions and asymmetries between family and school, the family has not lost its significance for the educational achievement of its children. Especially the PISA debate has revived public awareness of the fact that there is a relation between parents' socioeconomic status and educational aspirations and their children's school success (Becker 2009; Helsper and Hummrich 2005; Tillmann and Meier 2003). Drawing on this debate and developments in society, a new political school program was founded in order to support the implementation of all-day schools in Germany (BMBF 2009). This pursued two political goals: On the one hand, children should be assisted and cared for in order to provide their parents with a better balance between work and family life. On the other hand, parents should

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also be encouraged in their educational and parental competencies (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006, p. 10). “Therefore, the parents’ situation seems to be paradoxical: Relieved by new caring and school forms, they otherwise experience a strong pressure to provide a ‘good’ childrearing and education for their children” (Jurczyk 2008, p. 11, translated).

Comparing the latest and past historical developments, this indicates a new transformation process in the relation between school and family: Although, historically speaking, the role of parents has been questioned more and more, it is now viewed as pedagogically relevant. But there is still no answer to the question whether this change of consciousness influences the relationship between family and school in any kind of partnership. The present chapter focuses on this question and is based on findings from the research project “Educational processes between family and all-day schools.”<sup>1</sup> It deals with the potentials of and barriers to the family–school relationship under all-day school conditions. Before discussing the results of this project, the research design will be presented followed by a review of the debate on parental involvement in secondary schools and an outline of the concept of educational and child-rearing partnership.

## Research Design

The investigation of all-day schools from the viewpoint of family sciences was based on a sample of 16 families of relatively homogeneous socioeconomic status. These were middle-class families with children attending Grades 7, 8, and 9 of either a voluntary or compulsory all-day<sup>2</sup> middle school (*realschule*) or advanced secondary school (*gymnasium*).

Two suppositions were connected to the choice of this sample: First, the way parents deal with school issues is expected to fit the institutional practice of the school. Therefore, involvement in school life and an exchange with the teachers are also expected (cf. Gomolla and Radtke 2002). Second, given the adolescent all-day students as a sample for examination, the compatibility of parental involvement and the educational goal of autonomy emerges as an age-specific problem.

Different methods were chosen in order to monitor everyday life in its thematic, structural, and temporal dimensions: First, episodic interviews (Flick 2000) with the

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<sup>1</sup>The research project was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). It was carried out between 2008 and 2010 at the German Youth Institute in Munich.

<sup>2</sup>The distinction between voluntary or compulsory all-day school refers to organizational aspects: Whereas the voluntary model combines half-day school with an educational programme after lunch, which includes a supervised homework session and supervised free-time activities, the compulsory model alternates between lessons and units of free-time activities during the whole school day (Radisch and Klieme 2003).

families, the adolescents, and the teachers were conducted from 2008 to 2010. These gathered general information about everyday situations and experiences in exchange with the school. Second, the adolescents were encouraged to write online diaries for 2 weeks giving detailed insight into their daily organization as well as their leisure-time activities in a daily and weekly rhythm. Third, because a part of everyday practice is settled on a latent level, observations were carried out in the school environment. Finally, all data were analyzed using the documentary method (Bohnsack 2001), which affords an explorative approach to generate an empirical typology. The present typology was based on a comparative analysis between all families giving an account of their experiences with school in different ways. This delivered insights into the actors' orientations that structure the family-school relation.

## Parental Involvement in Secondary School

An integrated system of education, caring, and child-rearing (e.g., in the form of all-day school) needs a binding model of cooperation combined with a clear allocation of competencies on the one hand and an orientation towards the lifeworlds of adolescents on the other (cf. BMFSFJ 2006, p. 14). This presupposes that pedagogues and parents have to agree on their different roles in order to establish a cooperation based on participation (Böllert 2008, p. 27; Melzer 1999). Although 68% of German parents voted for all-day schools, their willingness to get involved in school remains questionable (BMFSFJ 2010, p. 12).

Research on “parental involvement” operates on the level of interaction between families and schools with regard to its effects. Theoretically, it distinguishes between two forms of involvement: One concerns parental participation in school including individual contact (open house, calls, letters) or parliamentary participation (parent's evening, advisory boards, etc.) (*school-based involvement*). The other takes into account the educational measures and learning support of parents conducted outside the school (*home-based involvement*).

There is no consensus on which kind of parental involvement should be accepted as best practice. In contrast to primary school, parental involvement in secondary school is not clearly determined (Crozier 1999). One consequence shown by an American longitudinal study is a decreasing amount of parental involvement with increasing age of the students (Epstein and Lee 1995). In addition, parents often become uncertain about the right way to support their children in later years (Fagnano 1994). The more complex environment—more teachers, more students, more subjects—poses obstacles to parental involvement that should not be underestimated. In order to provide support for their children, parents are less and less able to grasp knowledge taught at school as it becomes more and more difficult.

In contrast, a meta-analysis of US studies on parental involvement in middle school from 1985 to 2006<sup>3</sup> focused on the potentials of parental involvement and its contribution to the school success of adolescents (Hill and Tyson 2009). Regarding the practice of parental involvement, the authors emphasized the changing relationship between adults and children towards more democratic forms of discussion and self-determination (Hill and Tyson 2009, p. 742). They concluded that “academic socialization” has the strongest positive effect on school success, followed by school-based involvement. Home-based involvement has the lowest impact, and one of its forms, the direct support of school work, even shows negative effects. The best ways of supporting the child—and that is what is meant by the term “academic socialisation”—are therefore to impart the value of education, to connect school work with emerging issues, to take the child’s career wishes seriously, and to support them by setting goals and making plans for the future. According to this, the reciprocal exchange between parents and their child about school issues is more decisive for achievement in school than any other form of parental participation.

In summary, it can be stated that adolescents tend to accept cooperation between parents and teachers when they are involved. Measures by parents or school staff that support autonomy can therefore be beneficial for learning, because they enable the development of a positive relationship and thereby have positive influence on learning processes (Grolnick 2009).<sup>4</sup> Given this background, the evaluation of the relationship between family and school consists of two aspects: the question who is acknowledged as a partner, and the question how to frame a cooperation that pursues autonomy. Conceptual considerations will be demonstrated in the following.

## The Concept of Educational and Child-Rearing Partnership

Today’s understanding of parental involvement is determined mainly by political thought, that is, within the different school councils. Consequently, the fact that parents’ attitudes and behavior play a key role for achievement in school often remains unconsidered. In order to fulfill the expectations of educational policy linked to the all-day school, it is increasingly necessary to involve parents and give them responsibility for not only rearing but also educating their children. In this context, the Wissenschaftliche Beirat für Familienfragen (2006) [scientific advisory

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<sup>3</sup>The term “middle school” is not used distinctively. It generally concerns adolescence, meaning Grades 6–9 or parts of them, but rarely Grade 5.

<sup>4</sup>A model experiment on cooperation between family and school was already conducted and evaluated in the 1970s in Germany. It showed that it is especially adolescents aged from 11 to 15 who can benefit from parental involvement as long as their needs and interests are appreciated and taken into account (Feser et al. 1980, pp. 66–67; Schmälzle 1985). As a model, it also stands for a cooperation that includes institutional partners who offer youth and adult education services. Hence, it resembles the concept of all-day school education (Coelen and Otto 2008).

board concerning family issues] advocates the concept of an educational and child-rearing partnership.<sup>5</sup> This consists of three main aspects:

1. First, it means a reciprocal exchange of learning experiences in family and school: “Learning experiences in school should be integrated into family life, just as out-of-school experiences are—ideally—meant to be connected with learning processes in school” (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006, p. 81, translated).<sup>6</sup>
2. Second, a “symmetrical process with a reciprocal openness of family and school” (transparency) is defined (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen, p. 82, translated). The goal should be a reciprocal exchange of information about the child that leads to joint initiatives for child support (“individual partnership”).
3. Finally, a “collective partnership” is targeted that addresses basic questions of everyday life in school, that is, school agreements (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen, p. 82).

Thus, the concept of the “educational and child-rearing partnership” implies that family and all-day school operate autonomously as equal partners and that they bear a collective responsibility for the education and upbringing of adolescents. Hence, this concept clearly exceeds the conventional parental involvement that followed a complementary or work-sharing model of cooperation and associated family with upbringing and school with education (Busse and Helsper 2007). In this case, both sides were dependant on the performance of the respective partner. Consequently, they were in a heteronomous position precisely because they yielded one of the tasks, education or upbringing, to the other partner. An all-day school increasingly takes over socialization tasks by providing personality development for the students not only in lessons but also during free time at school (Coelen and Otto 2008). Therefore, two additional ideal-type scenarios can be imagined that alter the balance of power in favor of one of the respective partners:

*Parents as counselors:* Although parents place responsibility for educating and/or rearing their children on the all-day school (delegation of responsibility), they retain the final authority on the question of “right” education. Consequently, they interpret their function in the school context as autonomous counselors—meaning a one-sided transfer of knowledge (Pohlmann 2006, p. 33).

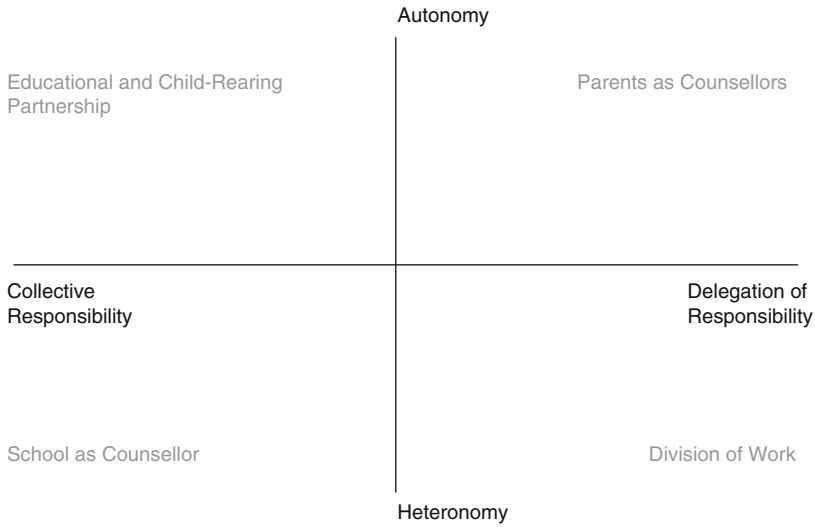
*School as counselor:* The school views the collective task of education and child-rearing as a restriction of its autonomy. In order to organize education and child-rearing according to its (professional) standards, it has to accept the parents as competent partners. Precisely because parents are not able to act in the same

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<sup>5</sup>Originally, the term was developed in the debate on early childhood education (Textor 2000). However, nowadays, it is also used in the school context (Korte 2008).

<sup>6</sup>As Bernstein has already shown (1973), such a feedback process makes it possible to avoid devaluing the “culture” of the child in the sense of a “compensatory education” but integrating it into school life.





**Fig. 1** Ideal types of the relationship between family and school

professional way as educators, they are seen as being in need of assistance and counseling (Kolbe et al. 2009; Melzer 1999, p. 301).<sup>7</sup>

The two ideal types will not function on a cooperative and work-sharing basis as long as one side claims to be the expert who delegates tasks and governs their realization. These “forms of infringement” can be accompanied by expectations from the family’s side about how their children should be properly educated by the pedagogic staff. In contrast, the school staff’s side articulates a vision of how parents are expected to frame the school support of their children. The respective ideal types of the relation between school and family can be illustrated as opposite pairs of collective and delegated responsibility plus autonomy and heteronomy (Fig. 1):

To accept family as an equally valued but different place of education and child-rearing is thus a programmatic request that aims to regulate responsibilities and competencies between school and family in order to prevent either side from coming under the control of the other (Groppe 2004, pp. 173–174). With the development of all-day schools, the conditions for an intensified cooperation leading towards a partnership have changed; the question is now how the relationship between family and school turns out to be empirically.

<sup>7</sup>Later studies of all-day school show that a deficit perspective on the pedagogical competence of parents can legitimate the school in its support function for parents (Fritzsche and Rabenstein 2009; Richter 2010).

## Types of Parental Involvement Seen From a Family Perspective

The following typology shows the bandwidth of realizations of the family–school relationship in empirical data:

Type I	Parental involvement as cooperation for the needs of the child
Type II	Parental involvement as counseling of school staff in case of need
Type III	Parental involvement as support for the parents in their child-rearing responsibility
Type IV	Parental involvement as an optional (informational) service for parents

### *Type I: Parental Involvement as Cooperation for the Needs of the Child*

This type is closest to the ideal of an educational and child-rearing partnership. On the one hand, these cases stand for transparency and reciprocal exchange; on the other hand, parents feel obligated to participate in school life, that is, to serve on boards and councils. The following citation impressively documents how this cooperation is realized:

German quote	English summary
(D)ja gucken wir dass wir an einem Strang ziehen ja (.) Und ähm (.) also die sind da sehr es ist ja auch oft so oder was heißt oft aber es ist ja so dass es nicht nur sozusagen von den Eltern ist oh ich merke mein Sohn oder meine Tochter hat in dem und dem Fach Probleme und jetzt möchte ich mal mit dem Lehrer oder der Lehrerin sprechen sondern es ist ja auch umgekehrt dass die Lehrer auf die Eltern zugehen und sagen können Sie nicht mal in meine Sprechstunde kommen oder zumindest telefonisch oder so dass wir mal reden und was können wir denn tun und was wäre denn gut für das Kind und so (.) Also das da ist schon sehr viel Bereitschaft und Engagement da finde ich auf jeden Fall [...] das ist eigentlich sehr kooperativ. (Frau H., GGGym)	We try to pull together. Because it's not always the parents who realize that their son or their daughter is having trouble with this or that subject and who want to speak to the teacher about it. It can also be the other way round with teachers contacting parents and asking them to come to the consultation hour or at least talk on the phone to be on speaking terms and to talk about what can be done for the child, what is best, and so forth. In my opinion, there's a lot of willingness and commitment, absolutely, it is very cooperative. (Mrs H., compulsory all-day advanced secondary school)

In this case, parental involvement means cooperation with reciprocal communication proposals. A motive for exchange seen from the parent's side can be learning problems. However, this exchange is perceived not only as a conversation about the problem but also as an opportunity to stay in dialogue and to reflect on measures and joint initiatives to be taken in favor of the child. In doing so, the student is participating at least symbolically by having his or her needs taken into account. In such a conversation, this mother experiences the school staff as "committed" and the relationship between school and family as "cooperative" or as a cooperation between equal partners in which both together are capable of solving the problem. Occasions for exchange do not just arise from

overcoming school problems. As the following quotation shows, they can also arise out of reflections on boosting personal development or supporting independent learning:

German quote	English summary
(D)as funktioniert eigentlich ganz gut muss ich sagen (.) dass man da sagt ich hätte jetzt gern in der Woche (.) nächste Woche ist eine Schulaufgabe dass man einfach (.) weil es ist ja oft so die haben (.) relativ wenig Hausaufgaben auf find ich jetzt persönlich //I: hm// und bevor sie dann rumsitzen und nichts tun ist mir halt lieber es wird in der (.) ((Name der offenen Ganztagschule)) schon gelernt bevor wir das abends noch machen müssen und //I: hm// ich mein der Fabian macht's eigentlich schon sehr selbständig aber gerade Vokabeln abfragen das kann man halt alleine nicht und (.) da bitte ich dann schon mal drum dass man da ein bisschen dahinter ist oder mal auch sich hinsetzt und mal 10 Minuten abfragt oder so und das (.) geht schon. (Frau G., OGGReal)	Actually, I have to say that it's working quite well. You can say that this week I want them to do this or that, because next week there's a test. From my point of view, it often turns out that they have less homework to do. Hence I'd prefer learning for the test in the framework of the homework session at ((name of the all-day school)) rather than doing nothing or than learning together with me for the test in the evening hours. Well, Fabian is quite self-reliant but, for example, checking vocabulary is difficult on his own, and then I ask for assistance and that's not a problem. (Mrs. G., voluntary all-day middle school)

Initiated by the parents—or, in this case, by the mother—the all-day school is given responsibility for educational tasks. When doing this, parents submit detailed suggestions to the school that are not only considered as part of the parents' responsibility ("learning together with me for the test in the evening") but also as that of the all-day school that has already integrated times for homework and learning into its curriculum. That way, a reciprocal educational partnership is established: On the one hand, it temporally relieves the parents, but on the other hand, it is also based on the parents' knowledge about the capabilities of their children and can therefore provide targeted support. Accordingly, one of the challenges of a partnership is to keep the balance not only between encouraging autonomy and executing control but also between the protection of single interests and the shared social responsibility in the school—the latter shown by the following report about a parent's evening situation:

German quote	English summary
(W)as ich ganz toll fand gestern war eben eine Mutter von einem Kind mit Alkoholproblemen da und hat sich auch geoutet und das fand ich Klasse also die //I: ja// also weil da gings erst drum wo alle Eltern sich tierisch aufgeregt haben und ja der gehört von der Schule und sofort weg und so und das ist halt auch nicht meine Meinung weil ich sage das Kind hat ein Problem und dem gehört erst mal geholfen also wobei ich halt sage wenn es jetzt der Felix wäre dann würde ich sagen okay erst mal raus Entzug Therapie und dann wieder in den Klassenverbund aber das Kind wenn es schon ein Alkoholproblem hat kann ich nicht normal in die Schule weiter gehen lassen also der kommt ja da nicht raus aber das ist jetzt meine Ansicht aber die hat sich das halt angehört und dann sagt sie ja also ich muss mich jetzt outen mein Sohn ist das der also da gings um eine Flasche die aus der Schultasche gefallen war und zwar mit Hochprozentigem. (Frau B., OGGym.)	What I really appreciated was the mother of a child with alcohol problems who came out with that after all the other parents had their say about it. They wanted that one to be thrown out of school immediately, but in my opinion he needs help first of all. If it had been my son, I would have said first of all—detox, therapy, and after that he can return to the class. They constantly talked about him because there was a bottle of strong liquor that fell out of his school bag. And then this mother said, yes, I have to admit it now: That's my son. (Mrs. B., voluntary all-day advanced secondary school)

Parental involvement in issues of school life broadens the base for the partnership. Then the cooperation concerns not only the well-being of one's own child but also conditions at the school and the well-being of all children. Openness and transparency mean a willingness to come out and admit problems as well as the willingness to provide transparency even when these problems endanger the well-being of the school community. These are the requirements for a constructive cooperation in which joint initiatives in favor of the child have to be coordinated with the interests of the school community. Concerning cases involving serious social and/or mental problems, it has to be decided carefully whether the aid system of the school is able to solve them or whether additional professional help is needed. However, that poses the challenge to the school staff of handling openness without pointing fingers. As a consequence, the basis for a professional intercourse with parents must be to take their situation seriously and to recognize them as whole persons.

### *Type II: Parental Involvement as Counseling of School Staff in Case of Need*

A further practice of parental involvement could be reconstructed in which parents view themselves as autonomous and competent without any recognition of their responsibility for school problems. In the relation between family and school, this leads to an asymmetric shift in favor of family. If the parents appear as counselors in the school context, this mostly concerns upbringing issues as in the following example:

German quote	English summary
(D)as war ja dann eigentlich schon das Ergebnis dessen dass wir da halt dann so Elternabende hatten wo wir halt dann auch gesagt haben als Eltern dass wir der Meinung sind dass da eben mehr durchgegriffen werden muss //I: hm// dass die Disziplin besser wird und dann haben die sich auch härter verhalten also //I: hm// weil ich denk dass das auch eine ganz normale Sache in diesem Altersbereich ist //I: hm// also da geht's an anderen Schulen genauso rund. (Frau M., GGGym)	Actually, the result was that we had several parent's evenings at which we stated our opinion as parents that more drastic action has to be taken to improve discipline, and after that, they took a stronger stance. Because I think that's pretty normal when children are this age; things are no different at other schools. (Mrs. M., compulsory all-day advanced secondary school)

In this reported situation, the teacher offers an open discussion forum by using the parent's evening as a platform for child-rearing or disciplinary issues. In doing so, he addresses all parents as competent in this matter, but parents refuse the proposal of joint problem solving. Rather, they see themselves as a group representing its interests to the teacher. Although opinions are exchanged, no joint solutions are developed. As a consequence, the parents attribute this to the educational style of the teacher, thus moving into an exposed position of counseling. In other words, parents support school life on the level of professional exchange, but they shift the responsibility for the solution of the disciplinary problem to the school staff.

An involvement of the students does not occur. It is more the case that the adolescents are exploited as a source of information:

German quote	English summary
(D)ann bin ich gleich zum Lehrer gegangen und habe mit dem dann ein längeres Gespräch geführt //I: hm// und dann war die Sache eigentlich schon wieder vom Tisch aber es hat halt in mir genagt und ich wollte ihm das mitteilen war natürlich für mein Sohn auch furchtbar peinlich weil am liebsten ist es ja den Kindern gerade in dem Alter dass sich die Eltern gar nicht mehr einmischen [...] aber der Lukas hat es mir erzählt. (Frau F., GGReal)	I went directly to the teacher and had a longer talk with him, and then the matter was closed, but I carried on worrying about it and I wanted to tell him that. Of course, it was embarrassing for my son, because children at this age prefer to keep parents out altogether... but it was Lukas who told me that initially. (Mrs. F., compulsory all-day middle school)

As the mother reports, she took the information from her son about events in school as an occasion to talk to the teacher. In doing so, she is not interested in a communication about the issue, but in a presentation of her view and perspective. At the same time, she is interpreting her son's reaction as an expression of embarrassment. This feeling derives—in an interactionist view—from the moral failure of either having betrayed the teacher or having given oneself the appearance of not being able to cope with the issue independently—therefore suggesting the assumption that the son feels disfranchised and relegated to a child's position. In short, the noninvolvement of adolescents concurrent with their function as informants not only deprives them of autonomous leeway but also endangers the bond of trust between the child and the respective parent.

### ***Type III: Parental Involvement as Support for the Parents in Their Child-Rearing Responsibility***

In direct comparison with type II, this type shows a similar but inverted structure of the relationship between family and school. For this type of involvement, situations are characteristic in which parents signalize that they are in need of support in rearing their children. This concerns mainly single parents who reach their limits of educational competence during the stage of adolescence, as documented by the following case:

German quote	English summary
Das waren Lehrkräfte die haben immer durch die Bank (.) da hatte ich immer das Gefühl die haben ihn mit den Verweisen bombardiert weil sie eine Angst vor dem Autoritätsverlust hatten [...] das sind halt so die Momente da fängt man dann halt auch an wirklich sich ein bisschen unbewusst auf die Seite seines eigenen Kindes zu schlagen und zu sagen also da verteidige ich mehr als vielleicht vernünftig ist weil ich mein äh (.) man weiß genau wo die Fehler bei seinem Kind liegen aber man hat immer das Problem wie soll ich ähm (.) jetzt agieren. (Herr P., GGReal)	There were teachers whom I felt were continuously bombarding him with reprimands because they feared a loss of authority. Those are the moments when you unconsciously begin to defend your child in an unreasonable way, because you know your own child's faults, but you always have the problem of how to act properly. (Mr. P., compulsory all-day middle school)

Experiencing an offensive attitude of the teachers towards his son as well as towards himself, Mr. P. moves himself into an ambiguous position: On the one hand, he feels challenged to take sides; on the other hand, taking sides appears to him as morally questionable. This leads him into an action dilemma in which he cannot figure out any solutions. Thus, parents of this type develop an orientation towards handling behavioral problems in an open and understanding manner. From a partnership, parents expect a collective sense of responsibility not only for educating but also for rearing their child. Parental involvement therefore is understood as an instrument for rebuilding parental autonomy and strengthening their self-help potential as parents instead of blaming them unilaterally (Oevermann 1996). However, these cases bear the danger of the school laying down professional standards for the cooperation, thus moving into a counseling position that holds only the parents accountable. Moreover, important resources are lost when the adolescent is not involved in finding a solution.

#### ***Type IV: Parental Involvement as Optional (Informational) Service for Parents***

In some cases, parental involvement occurs within informal contacts. Those parents frequently ignore institutional provisions such as parent's evenings. Consequently, they recognize the relationship as less continuous and more optionally focused on problems. In the exchange, both partners experience each other as open for contact and the requests of the other. The initiative for contact primarily relies on information from the school. This structure is shown in the report of Mr. U.

German quote	English summary
Also auch mit dem Herrn ((Name)) von der Nachmittagsbetreuung ähm wenn irgendwas sein sollte ich mein die versuchen erstmal alles selber zu regeln aber wenn sie meinen dass es die Eltern wissen sollten oder so dann telefonieren wir oder oder mailen uns an irgendwie das machen wir schon also das ist schon funktioniert schon ganz gut (.) Hab schon auch ein zwei Mal einen Anruf vom Maximilian gekriegt da wollte er mal befreit werden von der Mittagsbetreuung das machen wir natürlich nicht immer (.) ist klar. (Herr U., OGRéal)	Also concerning Mr. ((name)) who is one of those responsible for the after-school program: They try to sort things out by themselves first, but if they think parents should know or so then we'll talk on the phone or mail each other. Somehow we deal with it, and that works pretty well. I already got a call once or twice from Maximilian when he wanted to be excused from attendance, but of course we don't do this all the time you know. (Mr. U., voluntary all-day middle school)

From the perspective of this father, the family-school relationship turns out to be an extraordinary exchange. Its purpose is to inform parents about issues that cannot be solved by the staff. Paradoxically, the example contains no direct indication of cooperation. Priority is given to the father's decision to allow his son not to attend school in the afternoon. Viewing the practice described by the father in advance, however, the conclusion must be that communication between the adolescent and the afternoon staff has already failed. This holds the danger that the pedagogical

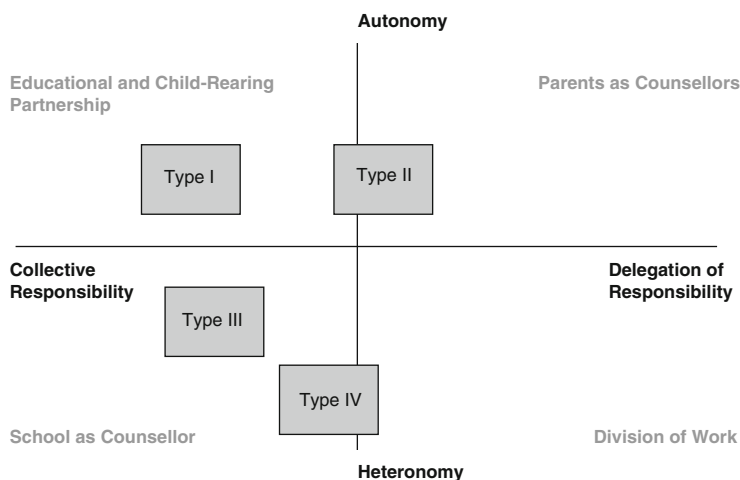
effort could be thwarted or even devalued by the father. The parent–child relationship and the pedagogue–student relationship remain almost unconnected without any collective responsibility being taken in form of coordinated initiatives. Hence, this example refers to a practice in which parents and pedagogues are dependent on each other: Because parents are in need of information from the school in order to intervene in events, they recognize school as a partner who needs their support only in problematic cases. Then, although parental involvement includes an open and cooperative attitude, it remains an option that does not lead systematically to a collective solution strategy involving the adolescent, but simply targets ad hoc measures.

### **Individual Partnerships with Limited Involvement of Adolescents**

The all-day school environment enables different kinds of cooperation between family and all-day school. From the parent's view, four different types of cooperation could be defined that fit in the scheme of ideal types in the following way (Fig. 2):

A comparison of real types with ideal types reveals four developmental trends within the all-day school context:

1. First, the family–school relationship changes from the once established work-sharing relationship towards an educational and child-rearing partnership. Accordingly, the all-day school signalizes to parents that it sees itself as being responsible for not only educational but also upbringing goals. From the perspective of the all-day school staff, as the study shows, such a responsibility is based primarily on social change in terms of an increasing variety of family forms.
2. Second, a collective responsibility is enabled by the increased willingness of the parents to share their child-rearing responsibility with the all-day school.
3. Third, based on this mutual opening, the types of parental involvement tend to become individual partnerships focusing on supportive measures for the child as described by the Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen (2006, p. 82)—without involving the adolescents, however. On the contrary, collected experiences of the parents reveal that the concept of a collective educational partnership remains rather diffuse.
4. Therefore, fourth, it is assumed that the educational partnership suggested by the Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen (2006, p. 81)—given its reciprocal exchange between learning experiences from inside school and outside school—is less relevant to either the interviewed parents or the school staff than the child-rearing partnership. This also applies to the vision of a “collective partnership” with its idea of a collective sense of responsibility for the school as well.



**Fig. 2** Real types of relationship between family and school

The results mainly confirm the significance of the child-rearing partnership in the secondary school context. Mostly, an exchange is realized only when a problem emerges. The cooperation initiated to solve the problem shows that the parents have no valid standards to which they can refer: Their concepts of cooperation vary from a continuous dialogue over the needs of their child to an optional exchange of information for parents. Accordingly, the school staff considers its engagement in a child-rearing partnership either as crisis intervention or as continuous support with reference to the students living in different family constellations. This leads to a variety of types of parental involvement that are due rather to the different levels of willingness for communication, accountability, and need for support than to contextual or structural factors such as the different family constellations or the conceptual difference between voluntary and compulsory all-day schools (see also Börner 2010, p. 16). In spite of this variety, both partners aim to keep the child on track for graduation at school and to keep the child socially involved in the school community.

A successful child-rearing partnership therefore cannot be defined only as compensation of (insecured) family constellations and resources. It has to strengthen all partners in their competencies. This requires a family–school relationship based on mutual trust and respect that has already developed before a problem occurs. In doing so, common decisions in favor of the child can be made on the basis of experiences according to the child’s behavior at school and at home.

Although the child-rearing partnership is an important component of the exchange from the parents’ and the school staff’s point of view, the educational partnership is just as crucial. Its relevance is not just based on a support for learning that is reflected in grade point averages. Just as important are informal educational processes in family life and the recreational or free-time activities at the all-day school that aim



to deliver a comprehensive education in the sense of developing the personality of the adolescent. For this reason, it remains unclear why the informal aspect of the educational partnership is discussed so rarely within this cooperation. One possible reason could be that the parents as members of the middle class already take the all-round support of their children for granted and therefore underestimate the potential of the all-day school (resulting in a doubling of institutional leisure activities for adolescent all-day students). Although a direct participation of parents in learning processes is less beneficial, as shown by scientific research, that does not exclude indirect support from parents. The communication with the adolescent proves to be especially effective in the sense of “academic socialization” (Hill and Tyson 2009) when it enables a reciprocal exchange of experiences between parents and children (Hofer and Pikowsky 2002, p. 260) as well as a reflection of oneself and one’s needs and interests by referring to learning contents and experiences (Vogelsaenger and Wilkening 2007, p. 77). Those social and personal competencies as well as visions of future achievements acquired by family communication can increase student’s self-confidence to put more effort into school affairs (Dahlhaus 2011, p. 131).

Despite their indirect approach, these measures and initiatives also require time for exchange and participation in school life. In addition, they demand a certain quality of the parent–child relationship (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006, p. 84). One consequence is that the concept of an educational and child-rearing partnership can be difficult to realize in secondary schools and has to be developed towards a cooperation supporting autonomy, meaning getting the adolescent involved and adopting measures to foster adolescents’ ability to act for themselves. When doing this, the student has to be acknowledged as competent partner who has a say in coping with problems. However, such a course of action in the framework of the parent–school–student triad offers not only parents but also the school staff (teachers as well as social workers at school) new chances of strengthening the adolescents’ competence to pursue a self-reliant lifestyle even at school. Such a contract for informal education could run the risk of being subordinated to the school primacy of formal education, that is, self-confidence for learning in order to improve school achievements. Therefore, what is needed is a self-critical attitude towards its own pedagogic doctrine and practices as well as an intense “dialogue” about chances and limits of all-day school education.

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# School Attachment and Performance: The Impact of Participation in Extracurricular Activities at School

Natalie Fischer and Felix Brümmer

In Germany, school is traditionally associated with the academic curriculum. Hobbies, games, sports, and lunch are activities not provided by schools. For most German students, the school day ends before lunch. However, since the results of PISA 2006, the introduction and expansion of so-called *Ganztagsschulen* [all-day schools] have been major topics in educational debates in Germany. To be considered an “all-day school,” a school has to offer supervision for at least 7 h a day, 3 days a week.<sup>1</sup>

All-day schools differ in the level of obligation for students: Some have mandatory extracurricular participation, and students are required to stay in school for extended hours at least 3 days a week (= compulsory schools). In others, participation in extracurricular activities is voluntary (= open all-day schools). This research focuses on the latter. Currently, federal states and governments are investing in two areas: increasing the availability of all-day schooling for children and youths and improving pedagogical processes and teaching quality at these schools. German politicians expect all-day schools to contribute to a better integration of underprivileged and low-achieving adolescents by enhancing social learning, motivation, school commitment, and performance. Although their pedagogical concepts are heterogeneous, every German all-day school provides extracurricular activities (Holtappels et al. 2007; Hertel et al. 2008). These activities offer opportunities to improve educational quality in schools.

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<sup>1</sup>Definition given by the standing conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Laender in the Federal Republic of Germany ([www.kmk.org](http://www.kmk.org)).

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The conversion and equipment of schools are being supported financially by the public investment program *Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung* (IZBB) [Future of education and care]. The *Studie zur Entwicklung von Ganztagschulen* (StEG) [Study on the development of all-day schools] was designed to evaluate the effects of this program. The study took a multiperspective and multicriterial approach. The target groups (i.e., the schools' principals, teachers, other pedagogical staff, parents, and students) filled out questionnaires at three measurement points (= waves) in the years 2005, 2007, and 2009. This chapter uses these data to analyze the effects of participation in extracurricular activity on academic performance and school commitment. The main research question is: What are the effects of (enduring) extracurricular participation on academic performance and school attachment, and how are the two outcomes connected to each other?

The following section presents results and theories on the effects of school-based extracurricular activities and after-school programs on school performance and motivational variables along with theoretical assumptions about the connection between school attachment and achievement.

## Theoretical Background and Empirical Results

### *Effects of Extracurricular Activities on School Motivation and Performance*

There is a large body of US studies addressing the effects of extracurricular activity participation on several cognitive and noncognitive outcomes (see, e.g., Eccles et al. 2003; Feldman and Matjasko 2005). This section summarizes the results of studies focusing on school performance and motivation. When analyzing academic performance, most studies focus on grade point averages (GPA) or college completion. In a summary of pertinent studies, Feldman and Matjasko (2005) have reported positive correlations between extracurricular participation and school performance. For example, students participating in sports have higher GPA and value academic performance more highly—which can be seen as an indicator of higher motivation.<sup>2</sup> Eccles and Barber (1999) have analyzed data from two of the eight waves of the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT) to examine effects of extracurricular activities. They found that students who joined extracurricular activities in grade 10 had a more positive development of GPA compared to their peers, even when sex, ethnic background, and social background were controlled for (see, also, Eccles et al. 2003). Based on the MSALT results, Eccles and Barber (1999) have assumed that participation may promote the development of social, physical,

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<sup>2</sup>Note that participating in sports, especially for boys, is also associated with risk-taking behavior (alcohol and drug abuse) (Eccles et al. 2003).

and intellectual skills. Results of meta-analyses generally support this notion (e.g., Durlak et al. 2010). Although the dependent variables investigated have been mostly grades and college completion, there are hints that academic competencies can be influenced as well: In an overview of the effects of “Out of School-Time Programs,” Lauer et al. (2006) have reported small but significant effects on reading and mathematics competencies that were independent of the type of the program evaluated. However, when programs were especially designed to enhance these competencies, effects were larger. Alongside academic competencies, other motivational and social student characteristics can influence school performance. This will be the topic of the next section.

### *Indirect Effects of Extracurricular Activities on School Performance*

One of the goals of implementing all-day schools in Germany is that the additional offers of extracurricular activities should have positive effects on school performance as measured by grades. However, school grades do not necessarily indicate the true competencies of students. They reflect classroom processes, teacher personality, and school performance as seen and evaluated by teachers (Ingenkamp 1967; Rakoczy et al. 2008). School grades correlate merely moderately with standardized tests of competencies. In Germany, grades are slightly biased in terms of sex, ethnic background, and social background (Klieme 2003; Ditton et al. 2005). This is due to the fact that teachers create expectations of student performance that rely on variables like sex, family background, and attractiveness, and these expectations influence assessment (Babad 1993; Rustemeyer and Fischer 2007). Additionally, grades are influenced by many factors including not only domain-specific achievement but also social and motivational factors (Lehmann et al. 1997; Klieme 2003; Rakoczy et al. 2008).

Zief et al. (2006) have suggested that after-school programs have the power to change student behavior and social and emotional outcomes, and that this, in turn, leads to higher grades. Based on a review of experimental studies investigating the impact of after-school programs on student outcomes, they conclude that these programs can influence grades, but have no effect on achievement as measured by standardized tests.<sup>3</sup>

However, school grades are important prerequisites for a successful transition to adulthood. Thus one can assume that changing grades indirectly by influencing social behavior or school attachment may be a powerful capacity of all-day schools. Barber et al. (2010) consider extracurricular activities to be settings providing opportunities to enhance identification with the values and goals of the school (i.e., school belonging, school attachment). As a result, these activities promote the

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<sup>3</sup>For another viewpoint, see Lauer et al. (2006) cited above.

improvement of academic performance. Similarly, Mahoney et al. (2005) have argued that extracurricular participation leads to improved school achievement because it facilitates stronger emotional and social connections to one's school (cf. Marsh 1992). These relationships are the issue of the next section. It focuses on the affective bonds between students and school, referred to as school attachment (Hirschi 1969). Feelings of connectedness can be defined as a component of school engagement (Woolley and Bowen 2007) that some empirical studies have found to predict academic achievement (Finn and Rock 1997; Klem and Connell 2004).

### ***Extracurricular Activities and School Attachment***

The connections students feel with their school have been linked to a variety of outcomes in and outside school (Anderman 2002; Eisele et al. 2009). School attachment and engagement are influenced strongly by social relationships at school (Klem and Connell 2004).

Based on Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1993; Ryan and Deci 2000), one can assume that school attachment is an expression of affiliate needs (Anderman 2002). Hill and Werner (2006) have found that higher affiliate needs correspond with higher school attachment in children and adolescents from grades 3 to 12. Based on Hunt's (1975) person–environment fit theory, Eccles et al. (1993) have conceptualized school attachment as dependent on the match between students' needs for relatedness and autonomy and the school context. Thus, the frequently found decrease in school attachment in middle school may have its origins in a changed school context that is not likely to meet developmental needs for relatedness and autonomy. Jacobs and Eccles (2000) have proposed that this is due to changes in classroom teaching in middle school (cf. Anderman and Anderman 1999). It can be attributed to changing requirements of the curriculum, leading to more control and allowing less time for caring social relationships (Urdu and Midgley 2003). Consequently, extracurricular activities at school are potentially more responsive to students' needs and their individual learning processes (Fischer et al. 2009b). For example, extracurricular activities focus on peer groups (cf. Eccles and Barber 1999) in which adolescents can experience more autonomy than in classrooms. According to Larson (2000), structured activities can positively influence youth development because of this peer orientation. On the basis of these assumptions, extracurricular participation in all-day schools should lead to increased school attachment.

### ***Dosage of Extracurricular Activities***

Based on the results described above, it seems likely that extracurricular participation in all-day schools can have a positive influence on the development of school

motivation and grades. Existing models of after-school program effectiveness assume that this depends on the process quality of the activities (cf. Miller and Truong 2009) as well as participation dosage (Vandell et al. 2007). Fiester et al. (2005) have differentiated between “absolute attendance,” which means joining an activity compared with not participating; “attendance intensity,” which covers the amount of time per week/month, and so forth; and “duration,” which refers to the length of participation over time (1 year, one school term, etc.). Fiester et al. (2005) have emphasized the importance of these variables for the evaluation of extracurricular activities. In a review, Simpkins et al. (2004) especially highlighted positive correlations between attendance duration and GPA. Attendance intensity also proved effective. Welsh et al. (2002) have evaluated a remedial program and found that the variables “duration” and “attendance intensity” showed linear relations with the variables “school performance” and “motivation”: Students who attended the program steadily and intensively for 2 years had the highest increase in GPA and motivation. A steady but not so intensive attendance resulted in a lower increase. Attendance for 1 year only resulted in effects if it took place on a regular basis. Vandell et al. (2007) have focused on the importance of dosage as well as the need to link regular participation to a positive academic, social, and motivational development.

### ***Former Results of the Study on the Development of All-Day Schools***

Effects of extracurricular participation on motivation (school attachment, learning goal orientation) and school performance have already been analyzed with data from the StEG study. Based on a subsample and the first two measurement points, Fischer et al. (2009a) examined changes in learning goal orientation and achievement. Their results showed that participating in extracurricular activities in German all-day schools leads to advantages in the development of learning goal orientation and academic performance (i.e., grades) after the transition to middle school. A positive development of learning goal orientation depended highly on how students perceived the process quality of the activity, whereas grades were influenced more highly by the duration of participation. However, when using growth curve analyses covering three timepoints and more than 6,000 students in compulsory and open all-day schools, no more effects of extracurricular participation on school performance could be found. But the process quality of the activities impacted on the development of grades (Kuhn and Fischer 2011). Similar results were found for motivational variables (Fischer et al. 2011a). This chapter focuses on students attending open all-day schools (voluntary participation) to ensure that effects of enduring participation are not confounded with the organization type of the all-day school. Moreover, dosage is a special focus of this study, because it concentrates on persistent (long duration) attendance over a 2-year period instead of comparing “absolute attendance” with “no attendance.” An additional focus is on the connection between school attachment and grades.



## Research Question and Model

This research on the individual effects of extracurricular participation in German all-day schools is based on a model that includes individual and family background as well as duration of participation to explain the development of academic and motivational skills (Fig. 1). It assumes that enduring extracurricular participation has an impact on the development of school attachment and school achievement. Usually, both dependent variables decline throughout adolescent development. However, extracurricular participation should have the potential to stop this decline. Moreover, considering the relationship between school attachment and achievement, an indirect effect of enduring participation on school achievement via school attachment is expected. These effects are expected even after controlling for relevant background and variables. Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized associations.

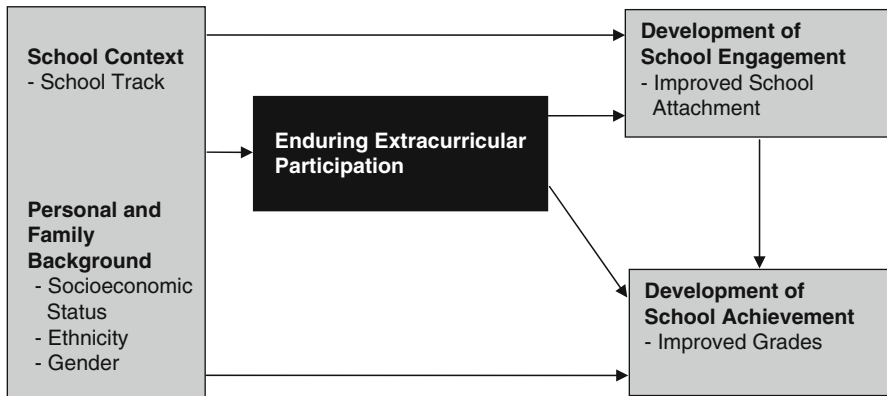
## Method

### *Sample*

The subsample from the StEG study contained students from 98 open all-day schools who filled in questionnaires as 5th graders in 2005 and participated at least once in the survey ( $n=3,230$ ). Seventeen of the middle schools were Gymnasiums, which is the highest track in Germany. At the first measurement point, the average age of the sample was 11 years, and 48% of the sample was female ( $n=1,550$ ). In addition, 25% had an immigrant background, meaning that at least one parent or the student himself/herself was born outside Germany ( $n=758$ ). On average, students had a value of 45 (range 16–90,  $SD=16.65$ ) on the highest international socioeconomic index of occupational status in the family (HISEI; Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996).

### *Measures*

*Dependent Variables.* These were school attachment and average grade. School attachment, as a dimension of school bonding, refers to the student's feelings about the school itself (Liljeberg et al. 2011). A 3-item scale formulated by Floerecke and Holtappels (2004) was used to ask participants how they felt about their school (e.g., "I like to be in this school"). Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*isn't right at all*) to 4 (*totally right*). The reliability of the scale was acceptable with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$  (2005),  $\alpha = .70$  (2007), and  $\alpha = .76$  (2009). A confirma-



**Fig. 1** Model of individual effects of extracurricular activities in school (Based on Miller and Truong 2009; Stecher et al. 2007; Vandell et al. 2007)

tory factor analysis with all three timepoints revealed a strict measurement invariance according to Meredith (1993) ( $\chi^2 = 156.082$ ,  $df = 25$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $RMSEA = .04$ ).

Grades on the latest report card were requested directly from the students. Empirical findings indicate that this is a valid indicator of school performance, and student reports correlate highly with those of teachers (Dickhäuser and Plenter 2005). For each measurement point, the grades for German, mathematics, and the first foreign language (mostly English) from the last report card were combined to form an arithmetic mean. The German 6-point grading scale was inverted, so that low numbers indicate low and high numbers indicate high achievement.

*Independent Variables.* In open all-day schools, students participate voluntarily in extracurricular activities; they do not have to attend them. As described above, duration of participation in extracurricular activities is an important factor for their effectiveness. Thus, the present research focuses on effects of enduring participation. The corresponding dummy variable distinguishes between students who did not participate in extracurricular activities at all or only once during the study, and students who participated at a minimum of two measurement points.

Effects of enduring participation in extracurricular activities on school attachment and grades were controlled for sex, socioeconomic status, immigrant background, and school track (highest track vs. other tracks).

### *Statistical Analyses*

The developments of school attachment and grades were modeled as two separate latent growth curves. Both developments were traced back to two latent factors: intercept and linear slope. Time code was wave number. Latent growth curve models

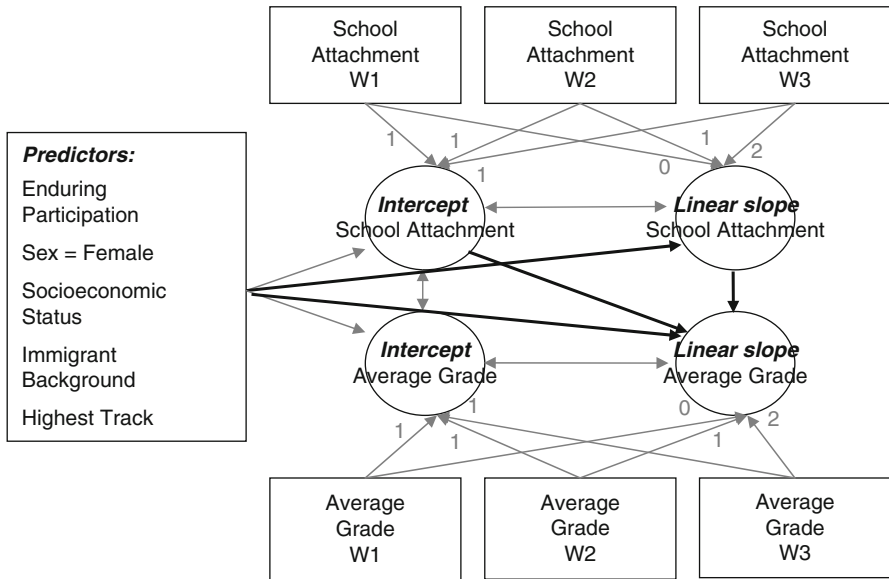


Fig. 2 Complex model with two conditional growth curves

can be used to describe and explain development over time individually as well as in groups. Analyzing growth by structural equation models allows one to test the fit between model and data (Bollen and Curran 2006; Duncan et al. 2006). First, an unconditional growth curve model was administered to both of the outcomes to test the fit of the linear approach.

A complex model containing two growth curves was applied to test the hypothesized relations (see Fig. 1 for hypotheses and Fig. 2 for the model): The conditional growth curve model for school attachment contains enduring participation and control variables as predictors. The same model was applied for the intercept of the average grades. In line with the hypothesis that participation in extracurricular activities influences grades mediated by school attachment, the linear slope of grades was additionally predicted by the intercept and linear slope of school attachment. The significance of indirect effects was tested.

The latent growth curve analyses were performed with Mplus 5.21. Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) was applied to deal with missing values on the parameter level. The MLR estimator was chosen to meet nonnormality and nonindependence of observations. Standard errors were corrected using TYPE=COMPLEX, which is a function of Mplus that takes the clustered data structure into account.

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics of school attachment

	Wave 1 (5th grade)	Wave 2 (7th grade)	Wave 3 (9th grade)
<i>n</i> (students)	2,628	2,795	2,641
<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	3.21 (0.75)	3.03 (0.77)	2.86 (0.80)

Note: 1 = low attachment, 4 = high attachment

## Results

### *Development of School Attachment and Grades*

From 2005 to 2009, school attachment decreased continuously in the sample. In 5th grade, the average scale value was 3.21; in 9th grade, 2.86. In sum, on a 4-point scale, students reported mainly positive feelings about their school (see Table 1).

An unconditional linear growth curve model (without predictors) fitted the data almost perfectly ( $n=3,215$ ,  $\chi^2=0.03$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $CFI=1.00$ ,  $RMSEA=.00$ ). The mean intercept of school attachment was 2.99; the mean linear slope,  $-0.15$ . Both estimates were highly significant ( $p<.001$ ). This confirms the assumed linear decline. Grades developed in almost the same manner. A linear growth curve showed an acceptable fit with the reported grades ( $n=3,151$ ,  $\chi^2=33.34$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $CFI=.97$ ,  $RMSEA=.10$ ). The mean intercept of the average grades was 3.77; the mean linear slope,  $-0.33$ , indicating a linear decline. Both estimates were highly significant ( $p<.001$ ).

Descriptive values confirmed that the average of grades in German, mathematics, and the first foreign language was clearly lower in 9th grade compared to 5th grade. In contrast to attachment, the decrease in grades occurred during the first 2 years. There was only a small change from wave 2 to wave 3 (see Table 2).

### *Results of the Conditional Growth Curve Model*

Tables 3 and 4 report the results of the conditional growth curve model for both independent variables separately. Fit statistics refer to the model with two growth curves as a whole. Values show that the model fitted the data well ( $n=3,230$ ,  $\chi^2=87.99$ ,  $df=18$ ,  $CFI=.97$ ,  $RMSEA=.04$ ).

Concerning the intercept of school attachment, results showed that attending *Gymnasium*, the school type with the highest track, was related particularly positively to initial school attachment in 5th grade. Furthermore, higher socioeconomic status related to higher school attachment. Girls reported more positive feelings about their school than boys.

Enduring participation correlated negatively with the intercept of school attachment. Students who participated in extracurricular activities during at least two measurement points initially showed less school attachment than the other students (see Table 3). However, as hypothesized, the results for the slope of

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics of average grades

	Wave 1 (5th grade)	Wave 2 (7th grade)	Wave 3 (9th grade)
<i>n</i> (students)	2,610	2,779	2,632
<i>M</i> (SD)	4.26 (0.74)	3.99 (0.74)	3.95 (0.79)

Note: 1 = low achievement, 6 = high achievement

**Table 3** Effects on school attachment

	Intercept	Linear slope
Enduring participation (dummy)	-.15 (.07)*	.18 (.08)*
Female (dummy)	.14 (.06)*	.07 (.08)
Immigrant background (dummy)	-.09 (.07)	-.00 (.08)
Socioeconomic status	.09 (.04)*	-.05 (.04)
Highest track ( <i>Gymnasium</i> vs. other school types; dummy)	.80 (.10)***	-.35 (.10)***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.15 (.03)***	.04 (.01)**

Note: StdXY—standardized results for continuous predictors, StdY—for dummy variables; standard errors in parentheses

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 4** Effects on average grades

	Intercept	Linear slope
Enduring participation (dummy)	.02 (.07)	.08 (.10)
Female (dummy)	.27 (.05)***	-.08 (.07)
Immigrant background (dummy)	-.24 (.06)***	.33 (.11)**
Socioeconomic status	.21 (.03)***	-.04 (.04)
Highest track ( <i>Gymnasium</i> vs. other school types; dummy)	.64 (.10)***	-.17 (.16)
Intercept school attachment	<i>Correlation: r</i> = .16 (.04)***	
Slope school attachment		.14 (.06)*
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.18 (.03)***	.06 (.03)**

Note: StdXY—standardized results for continuous predictors, StdY—for dummy variables; standard errors in parentheses

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

school attachment showed that enduring participation had a positive effect on the development (slope) of school attachment. Students who attended extracurricular activities for a longer period of time showed better growth rates for school attachment (most likely a smaller decrease) than peers who participated only once during the study or not at all.

Looking at the slope of school attachment in the highest school type (*Gymnasium*), the initially high average school attachment decreased in a more pronounced way than in other types of school. In sum, the model explained only a very small part of the variance in development (see Table 3).

Concerning the intercept of grades, all analyzed variables of personal, family, and school background related significantly to initial grades (see Table 4). Girls started

out with better grades than boys. Socioeconomic status was connected positively to grades, whereas students with an immigrant background showed lower school achievement. At the beginning of the study, students in the highest track (*Gymnasium*) reported considerably better grades than other students. Contrary to the hypothesis, there was no significant relation between the slope or intercept of grades and enduring participation when considering the control variables (see Table 4).

Concerning slope, immigrant background related positively to the development of grades. Although enduring participation in extracurricular activities had no direct effect on school achievement, school attachment made a difference: Whereas the intercept of school attachment was not related to the change of grades, the slope had a positive effect: The better positive feelings about school developed, the better the grades became. It has to be considered that, once again, only a small part of the slope's variance could be explained.

Analyses showed a direct positive effect of enduring participation in extracurricular activities on the development of school attachment as well as a direct positive effect of the development of school attachment on the development of grades. However, the indirect effect from participation on grades mediated by the development of school attachment failed to attain significance ( $\beta=.01$ ,  $SE=.01$ ,  $p=.08$ ).

## Discussion

Effects of extracurricular participation on school motivation and performance are intricate. This chapter has highlighted the relationship between effects on school attachment and school grades using a subsample of the StEG study on the development of all-day schools (Fischer et al. 2011b). In “open all-day schools,” students participate in extracurricular activities voluntarily. Results show that continuing participation in this kind of school promotes the development of school attachment. As children proceed through middle school, their school attachment declines. Extracurricular participation in school could protect adolescents against such a development. Even though in our sample, participants in extracurricular activities started out with lower school attachment, they developed considerably better than their peers who did not attend extracurricular activities at school. Former analyses showed no such effect for compulsory schools (Fischer et al. 2011a). Thus, voluntariness of participation<sup>4</sup> seems to be crucial for the support of school attachment, which is related to a positive development in several aspects in literature.

However, in this subsample, we found no effects of enduring activity participation on grades. Based on a growth curve model with two curves, we found that the development of school attachment impacts significantly on the development of grades.

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<sup>4</sup>Note that although participation is voluntary in open all-day schools, it is possible that the decision to participate was made by parents or teachers. However, parent data from StEG show that students mostly decide for themselves in middle school.

Thus, promoting the development of school attachment by means of extracurricular activities should lead to a positive development of grades as well. In our study, this indirect path is not significant. This could be due to the rather small size of the effect of enduring participation in extracurricular activities on school attachment. Moreover, the assumed linear decline of school grades takes place mainly from grades 5 to 7. This may explain why analyses based on two measurement points (i.e., the development from grades 5 to 7) resulted in effects of enduring participation on school grades (Fischer et al. 2009a), whereas analyses of the development from grades 5 to 9 do not (Kuhn and Fischer 2011). Thus, it would be worth comparing the linear growth model for grades with other kinds of trends. This is impossible with only three measurement points.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of the kind of activity for specific effects (Eccles and Barber 1999; Eccles et al. 2003), making it plausible that activities provide differential effects depending on subject matter and process quality. In this research, we did not include activity quality, although this has proved effective in previous analyses of the StEG data. High-quality activities are more effective in influencing the development of grades (Kuhn and Fischer 2011) and motivation (Fischer et al. 2011a). Thus, it can be assumed that providing high-quality activities at school should further support the development of participants' school attachment and achievement. In this research, the effect on school attachment can be attributed to participation in extracurricular activities at school per se. Surprisingly, we find that school attachment is supported by enduring participation, independent of the type of activity. As school attachment relates to school performance in this research, this reveals a potentially powerful capacity of extracurricular activities in all-day schools. Moreover, school attachment is associated with social and emotional adjustment in school (e.g., Hill and Werner 2006). Thus, promoting school attachment is in itself a valuable feature of extracurricular activities at school. Further research on direct and indirect effects of extracurricular participation on school performance should focus on specific programs designed to improve specific skills and competencies (cf. Lauer et al. 2006) in order to further differentiate the effects of extracurricular activities on academic versus nonacademic competencies.

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# Daily School Time, Workforce Participation, and Family Life: Time Spent in School as a Condition of Family Life

Ivo Züchner

When children are of a certain age, family life is strongly linked to the school. Because attending school is mandatory in all countries, school time imposes limits on family life and family vacations. On the one hand, school time makes other family activities impossible at that time; on the other hand, it frees parents from having to care for or supervise their children. And, in most countries, school time extends from early morning to late afternoon. Only some countries such as Austria, Germany, Greece, and, in part, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland have historically chosen shorter school times (Allemann-Ghionda 2005, pp. 77–78). Up to 2003, elementary and secondary school traditionally ended at lunchtime for the majority of students in Germany. But German school time has become a new issue during the last 10 years, because the policy on school time has changed through the implementation and expansion of so-called all-day schools providing lunch and an enlarged and changing time pattern (including extracurricular activities) in the afternoon. Two of the reasons for increasing the number of hours students (can) spend in school each day were the poor results of German students in international assessments of education standards and the demand for a better work–life balance for parents through all-day schools. As one can expect, such moves to change some aspects of society’s self-conception have raised a lot of discussions.

This chapter focuses on the relation between school time for children, working hours of woman, and family life. In other words, it analyzes the effects of all-day schooling both on parents’ (especially mothers’) workforce participation and on family life, which some politicians feared would be endangered by all-day schools.

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Therefore, in the first part, I take an explorative look at the relation between family life, school hours, and gainful work from an international perspective. In the second part, I analyze the changes that accompany the implementation of all-day schools in terms of the employment of woman and family life.

## Research Question and Framework

In short, the research question is whether the time students spend in school has a significant influence on the work–life balance of parents and the constitution of family life. In a German perspective, this is an important and often discussed issue because of the changes in the German school system over the last 8 years.

### *Introduction of All-Day School*

Historically, Germany in the twentieth century—unlike most other European countries—established school as a half-day institution, leaving the afternoon free for leisure and all types of out-of-school activities (Ludwig 2005). Therefore, traditionally, German students focus on academics in the morning and are free to organize their own time in the afternoon. The introduction and expansion of all-day schools entered the political agenda mainly after the poor performance of German students in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2000) in the year 2000. Two results were of major concern:

- First, German students scored well below average on reading skills and knowledge of mathematics, joining Italy, Hungary, and Poland in the bottom third of the ranking list.
- Second, success in competence tests was highly dependent on the parents' socio-economic background—more so than in most other participating countries (OECD 2001, p. 192). Together with the Czech Republic and Hungary, Germany's students showed above-average inequality together with below-average performance (OECD 2001, p. 191).

One of the reactions triggered by the subsequent political debate was the decision to expand the number of all-day schools (that made up less than 10% of all schools in Germany at that time) and therefore raise the number of hours spent in school—with the goal of creating more possibilities of supporting children in their educational process and giving them the opportunity to receive additional instruction after regular classes. German students spend less time in school than students in most other European countries. The OECD stated that in 2003, 7- and 8-year-olds in Britain received 880 h of schooling a year, an amount similar to France. Germany's half-day system cut the average to 630 h, putting it at the bottom of the OECD nations (<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,2380902,00.html>).

Another reason for expanding all-day schools in Germany was sociopolitical. In the 1990s, Germany improved its childcare system for children up to the age of 6 to enable better workforce participation of (both) parents. Now, it was seen that continuing workforce participation of woman with children at school age could only be secured through improved care facilities for children at this age. Keeping children in school longer should help parents balance work and family.

Since 2003, the federal states [*Länder*] and the federal government have been investing in an improvement of the availability of all-day schooling for children and adolescents. The conversion and equipment of schools is financially supported by the investment program *Zukunft Bildung und Betreuung* (IZBB) [A future for education and care] designed to enhance the quality and quantity of all-day schools. Moreover, and in close connection, numerous initiatives have been launched by the federal states since the 1990s. In this respect, the development of all-day schools is the responsibility of each state that can set its own priorities (e.g., supporting mainly elementary schools or favoring special types of all-day school). As a result, all-day schools have experienced a considerable upswing in Germany in recent years: The number of schools operating on an all-day basis rose from 4,951 in 2002 to more than 13,000 in 2009 (KMK 2011). In other words, the percentage of all-day schools rose from 10% in 2002 to 47% in 2009. Hence, in 2009, about 27% of all students at elementary or secondary schools were already “all-day students.”

In this context, it is important to indicate the different types of German all-day schooling. All-day school in Germany does not automatically mean that all students of that school go to school all day. The degree to which students are obliged to attend extracurricular activities reveals a rough distinction between open, part compulsory, and fully compulsory types of all-day school. Open types of all-day schooling are schools in which students (i.e., their parents) decide for themselves whether they would like to take part in the all-day (and therefore extracurricular) opportunities offered to them. These schools can be distinguished from fully compulsory all-day schools in which all students are obliged to participate in the all-day provisions. Mixed school types (in which, e.g., a complete class joins in the provisions and others do not or only some age groups do) are known as partly compulsory all-day schools (Holtappels et al. 2008, p. 38; Stecher et al. 2007).

### ***Expected Changes to Family Life Through All-Day Schools***

Possible effects of all-day school can be identified by comparing a family in which the children attend all-day school versus a family in which the children return home at lunchtime. Hypothetically, the following effects could be expected:

1. *Work–life balance*. If one supposes that parents and children remain together up to a certain age because of the need for supervision, then all-day school offers relief of this task and should raise the workforce participation of women. To examine the possible effect of the different time use of children and parents,

Beblo et al. (2005) used a microsimulation to predict the effect of the expansion of all-day schools on the workforce participation of mothers of elementary school children. They found that considerable labor supply effects were to be expected from an extensive network of all-day schools: The workforce participation of mothers would rise by 4% points in western and by 1% point in eastern Germany.

The average working time of the mothers would increase by more than 16% in western and by 5% in eastern Germany. A more realistic scenario, which is currently being striven for implicitly in the federal investment program *Future for Education and Care*, is a nationwide increase in the provision of places at all-day schools to 30%. In this case, according to our calculation, the participation rate would rise by just under one percentage point in western Germany, and the average working time would increase by 4%. Smaller effects are expected in eastern Germany, because the available supply of places in after-school care facilities and all-day schools there is already more likely to enable both parents to work today than is the case in western Germany. (Beblo et al. 2005, p. 2, translated)

2. *Lunch.* Because school takes over the feeding of children at lunchtimes, this can be expected to save not only parents' time through not having lunch together but also through not having to buy and prepare food or clean up.
3. *Homework.* If the practice of homework is changing in all-day school (homework is done at school or is dropped), then it can be expected that parents spend less time monitoring homework.
4. *Leisure time of the children.* The organized and self-steered leisure time of children and adolescents and the places in which this takes place vary a lot. Changes are to be expected if a lot of spare time is spent at school, whereas parents of half-day students frequently transport their children to friends, clubs, associations, and other leisure activities.
5. *Family activities and family relationships.* As a society that traditionally relies on the family model of the male breadwinner and the mother at home, Germany is still discussing whether family activities are reduced and family relationships become weaker because of the growing time children spend at school. This concern has to be viewed against the background that the autonomy (and responsibility) of parents in education has long been seen as one of the foundations of Germany society.

To summarize these theses, it could be expected that all-day schools in Germany will lead to parents (i.e., mothers) spending less time with their children. This free time could be used for (more) gainful work, education and training, leisure time, or voluntary work. This chapter will concentrate on the effects on the work–life balance and family life.

### ***Welfare Regime and the Time Children Spend at School or in Care in Selected Countries***

The perspective of social policy provides a framework for understanding the relation between workforce participation, domestic work, family life, and childcare.

Within social policy, the idea of using the welfare regime to describe and explain different patterns of social policy has played a major role in international comparisons (Castles and Mitchell 1993; Esping-Andersen 1990). Since the 1990s, the importance of women's workforce participation and childcare has been emphasized within different regime types (Esping-Andersen 1999; Lewis 1992). Without discussing the criticisms and different approaches (see, e.g., Castle and Mitchell 1993), I shall follow the very well-known proposal of Esping-Andersen, who identified three different types of welfare regime by analyzing decommodification and stratification through social policy (Esping-Andersen 1990): (a) liberal welfare regime, (b) social democratic welfare regime (or dual earner regime), and (c) conservative welfare regime (or strong male breadwinner regime). He retained these categories even when including the role of woman and childcare, with the insight that care work done by family members makes a major contribution to the functioning of social policy (see Esping-Andersen 1999).

Although stressing that no country fully matches one type, he classified the European and Anglo-American countries. For example, the United Kingdom and the USA follow the liberal regime, the Scandinavian countries are classified as social democratic welfare regimes, and Germany and France (and a lot of other central European countries) as conservative welfare regimes (there has also been some debate over whether to consider a fourth, southern type, see Ferrara 1996; Leibfried 1992; Bonoli 1997).

Without going into detail about the regimes, I want to combine the idea of the welfare regime with school times, or, in other words, to look at the relation between social policy and educational policy. For example, the establishment of a conservative welfare regime in Germany and Austria with strong reliance on the "male breadwinner model" together with the emphasis on the wife as housekeeping mother went along with the half-day school in which children spend the mornings in school and return home for lunch (Groschall and Hagemann 2002). In Scandinavian countries, educational policy was combined with care policy, resulting in a system of after-school care facilities. However, any further analyses of the link between school time and welfare regimes are less clear.

Looking at some European countries, there are some differences. The United Kingdom, which—with the exception of Scotland—stands for the *liberal welfare regime*, has compulsory all-day school for 5 days (Winch 2005), and the system is organized by an educational system that is historically separate from social policy.

Countries following the *social democratic regime* mostly mix school and care: Sweden has a combination of school and childcare for 5 days a week (Coelen, 2005). Finland also has school and additional care covering together more or less three-quarters of the day including lunch (Matthies 2002; von Freymann 2005).

Countries following the *conservative regime* have followed quite different development paths. France has all-day school (now for only 4 days a week), whereas Germany (up to 2002) had mostly half-day school, with students returning home at lunchtime. These two countries differ in their understanding of school: Whereas France has historically viewed school as a policy instrument (Veil 2002), and, as a side effect, never raised the question of women's workforce participation, in

Germany, education and social policy were quite separate. Augustin-Dittman (2005) describes the changing relation through all-day schools:

The establishment of all-day schooling modifies the German welfare state in a double model... Firstly, the traditionally separated relation between education and social policy is getting closer. Secondly, the welfare state's support of the traditional family model is supplemented by the perspective of reconciliation of family and working life. (p. 49)

One can see that school time (or school and after-school care time) cannot be linked directly to welfare regimes, mainly because of different approaches to educational and social policy. But where educational policy and social policy work hand in hand (e.g., France, Sweden), there seems to be higher possibility of all-day schooling or all-day care through a combined system of schools and care centers.

## **School, Working Time, and Family Time in an International Perspective**

An empirical analysis of the interrelationship of family time, school time, and gainful work from an international perspective can draw on the Eurostat data of the Harmonized European Time Survey Studies (HETUS).

### ***Harmonized European Time Survey Studies (HETUS)***

Within the process of European unification, the statistical offices of the EU countries are trying to harmonize their statistics in, for example, the European labor force survey (see European Commission 2003) and the time use surveys (see European Commission and Eurostat 2000). Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, is playing the key role in this. One of its products is the Harmonized European Time Use Surveys (HETUS) that are trying to bring the “time use surveys of the European Union” together into a comparable framework for all inhabitants of the EU. This is measured by detailed personal time diaries in the participating countries, and harmonized with internationally coordinated data collection methods and categories (European Commission and Eurostat 2000). The latest HETUS database contains studies carried out between 1999 and 2002, all with representative samples. This timepoint is quite useful, because 2002 marks the start of the German all-day school expansion. National sample sizes vary from 4,000 to 15,000 persons (Eurostat 2004).

### ***Sample Countries and Their School Time***

Looking at comparable data in a European context, it becomes clear that time use of the family and the workforce cannot be discussed only against the background of



all-day schools and childcare. Nevertheless, HETUS offers some interesting data on childcare and women's workforce participation that grant a first idea of the relationship between the time students spend at school and the time use of families and parents. Data were chosen from the above-mentioned countries for which there is good information on schooling time, that are part of HETUS, and that represent different welfare types, namely, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden, and the UK.

These countries reveal different amounts of time spent in school and/or in childcare. Following Allemann-Ghionda (2008), school times in these five countries can be summarized as follows, ranked in descending order of time spent in school:

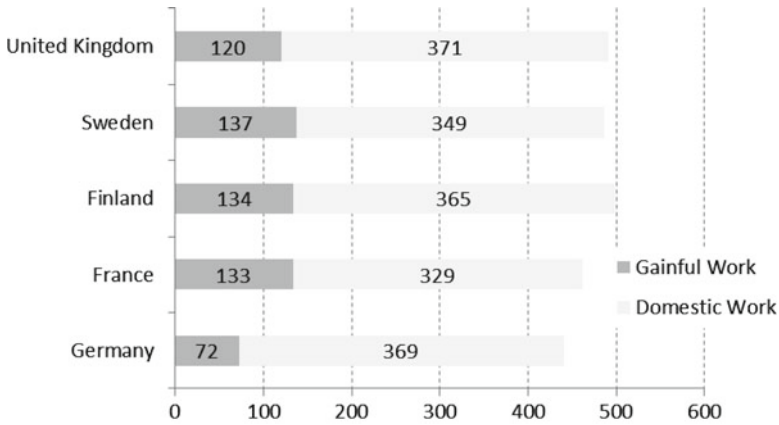
- In the United Kingdom—with the exception of Scotland—there is mandatory all-day school 5 days a week.
- In Sweden, the educational system relies on a mixture of school and public childcare for 5 days a week.
- In France, students attend all-day school 4 days a week.
- In Finland, education and care are combined in a system of school and extracurricular activities (including lunch) for about three-quarters of the day for 5 days a week.
- In Germany (at least up to 2003), school is organized in the morning and children return home at lunchtime (“half-day school”) (Allemann-Ghionda 2008, p. 678).

Even if this is just a brief and rough typification and the workforce participation of women with children varies between these countries, these differences can be compared with time of childcare (with the youngest child at school age) and time of gainful work. If there is a direct linear relation with school time, then it could be expected that the times of parents' childcare would be the shortest in the United Kingdom and Sweden and the longest in Germany and Finland. At the same time, one could anticipate that the time of gainful work (of women) would be the longest in the United Kingdom and Sweden and the shortest (or at least less full-time work) in Finland and Germany, because of the necessary family childcare time.

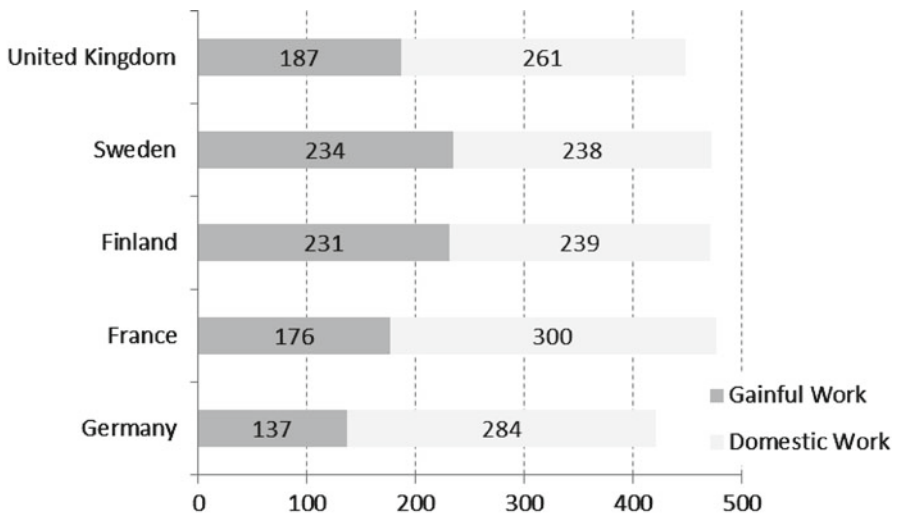
### *Findings from the HETUS*

Comparing the results of the time survey studies in the UK, Sweden, Finland, France, and Germany, it is possible to investigate the situation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Figure 1 shows the average time (in minutes per day) that mothers (in partnerships) spent on domestic work and gainful work.

Comparing these five countries at the beginning of the 2000s, German mothers spent far less time on gainful work—although living in a country in which the number of childcare facilities is beginning to catch up with those of other countries. On the other hand, in Sweden, Finland, and France, which all possess widely used systems of childcare, the mothers spent nearly double the amount of time on gainful work compared to German mothers. Differences in time for domestic work varied by about 35 min.



**Fig. 1** Gainful work and domestic work of mothers of children up to 6 years living in partnerships (minutes per day in 2000–2002) (Source: HETUS 2000–2002)



**Fig. 2** Gainful work and domestic work of mothers of 7- to 17-year-old children living in partnerships (minutes per day in 2000–2002) (Source: HETUS 2000–2002)

The following figure is of key interest, because it shows the relations for mothers with school-age children (Fig. 2).

Again, mothers in Germany in 2001 clearly spent the lowest time on gainful work, whereas in Sweden and Finland, countries classified to the social democratic regime, woman worked about 100 min more per day. France and the United Kingdom, with about 180 min of gainful work per day, lay right in the middle.

Related to school times, the country with the shortest school time had the lowest time spent on gainful work. Domestic work revealed no clear pattern; there did not seem to be any clear relation between gainful work and domestic work.

To summarize, before children entered school and while attending elementary school up to 2002, gainful work of mothers had been lowest in Germany. On the other hand, the other four countries revealed no big difference in gainful work of mothers before their children entered school, whereas women with school-age children in the two countries classified to the social democratic welfare regime clearly worked more than their counterparts in the remaining countries. It should also be noted that the countries classified to the conservative welfare regime, France and Germany, differed greatly. In conclusion, the data on these two countries reveal a relationship between less time spent at school and less time spent on gainful work, whereas the relation between gainful work, school times, and welfare regimes does not seem to be as clear in the other countries.

## **Changing School, Working Time, and Family Time in the Expansion of All-Day Schools in Germany**

To further analyze the effects of all-day school on the work–life balance and family life, I use the data from the German *Studie zur Entwicklung von Ganztagschulen* (StEG) [Study on the development of all-day schools] (Holtappels et al. 2008; see also Fischer & Bruemmer, in this issue). Before focusing on the effects of all-day schools on workforce participation and family life, I shall try to show what all-day school participation means in Germany and what the reasons for participating or not participating are.

### ***The Study on the Development of All-Day Schools (StEG)***

In 2005, a nationwide research program was launched by the StEG. The German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF; Prof. Klieme), the German Youth Institute (DJI; Prof. Rauschenbach), and the Institute for School Development Research (IFS; Prof. Holtappels) jointly assessed a large number of schools. The project was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Social Fund (Stecher et al. 2007) and is closely coordinated with the different federal states.

The study was a multiperspective survey. All groups participating in all-day schooling were asked to fill in a standardized questionnaire that was tailored to their needs (i.e., of school management, teachers, any other educational staff, parents, and students). The target groups were questioned at three measurement points (early summer 2005, spring 2007, and spring 2009). Students were surveyed in selected classes (two classes were selected from Grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 in each school).

This type of study permits an observation of changes and developments at individual schools over several years. The assessment was conducted by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg. The study collected systematic information on the workings, the pedagogical effects, and the specific problem areas of all-day schools. It was not concerned with evaluating individual schools or comparing them (Stecher et al. 2007). At the first measurement point, the sample contained nearly 65,000 persons from a total of 371 schools in 14 of the 16 German federal states. Questionnaires for the individual target groups were matched in the focal areas of assessment to enable a multiperspective analysis. For example, the instruments used by teachers and other pedagogical actors as well as the instruments for the elementary and secondary level students were kept parallel.

With regard to the scarce scientific evidence on the effects of all-day schooling, the study aimed to answer a multitude of important questions such as:

- What pedagogical and organizational models exist for all-day school concepts?
- Is the learning and teaching culture influenced by the introduction of all-day school provisions?
- And especially for the question raised here: Are all-day schools accepted by parents? How does all-day school impact on the family life of the participating students?

The following analyses were based on data from 30,562 students and 20,950 parents in 2005; 26,305 students and 17,523 parents in 2007; and 26,985 students and 16,349 parents in 2009. The longitudinal sample (Grade 5 in 2005) contained about 6,900 students.

### ***Participation in All-Day Schools***

Before analyzing the effects of all-day schools, it is necessary to describe how families participate in them. As said before, in 2009, about 47% of the schools in Germany were categorized as all-day schools, and 27% of the students in Germany were grouped as attending all-day school.

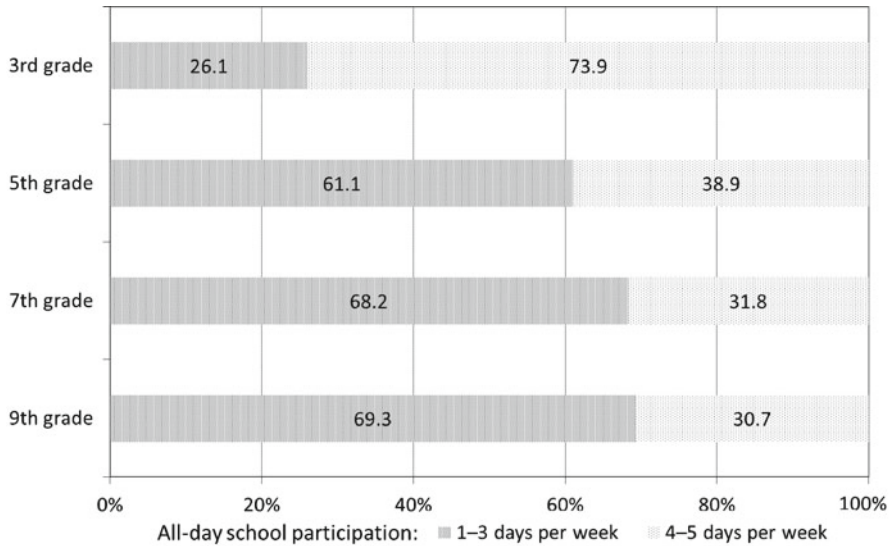
However, attendance at an all-day school can vary greatly. First, the different models—described above—result in different participation rates. In the compulsory all-day school models (full or partly), participation is mandatory; in open types, parents and children can choose whether they want to participate. Therefore, it is interesting to see that participation in open all-day schools varies over the school course. When given a choice, only part of the students participate in extracurricular activities at all-day schools (see Table 1).

Participation is highest in the younger years and decreases as students grow older. Participation also varies with a lot of further factors, for example, participation rates are significantly higher in the eastern German states than in the western ones.

**Table 1** Participation in all-day provisions at open all-day schools

	Percentage of students participating
3rd grade	71.6
5th grade	57.1
7th grade	57.1
9th grade	45.1

StEG 2009,  $n_{st} = 7,056$



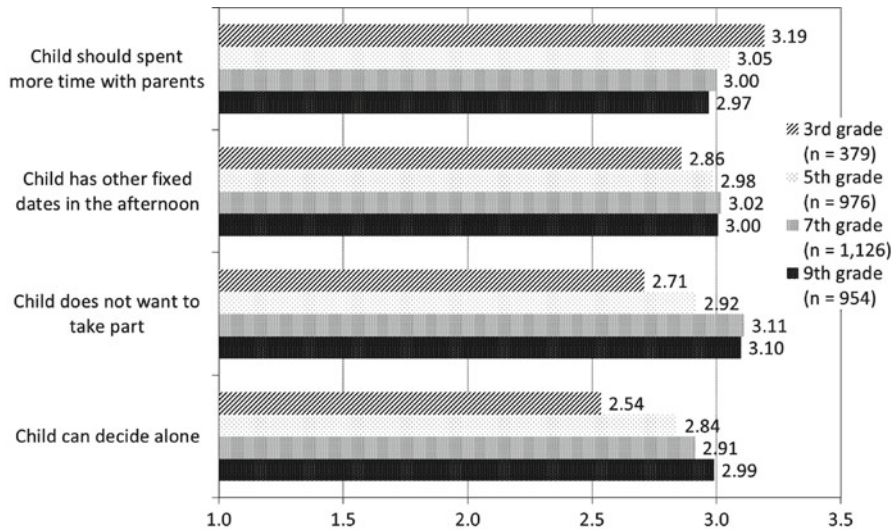
**Fig. 3** Intensity of all-day school participation (in days) (Source: StEG-Parents survey 2009)

Second, visiting all-day schools does not mean that students attend school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 5 days a week. Especially in secondary schools, students attend all-day school mostly only 2 or 3 days a week (Fig. 3).

In 3rd grade, about three-quarters of the students participate 4–5 days a week, whereas in secondary school, only about two-thirds participate, and that for only 1–3 days a week. Hence, the time spent in all-day schools still cannot be compared with school time in, for example, the United Kingdom.

When parents were asked why they did not participate or participated only part time, they gave the following answers (Fig. 4):

On a scale from 1 to 4, these four items were the most important from a list of ten items. The threat to family life—especially for parents of younger children—is the most important reason for not letting children attend all-day school activities. As children grow older, parents begin to leave the decision to them. On the other hand, when parents of 3rd-grade children were asked why their children did participate in all-day activities at school, the most important reasons were care and the opportunity to go to work (Zuechner 2008).



**Fig. 4** The most important reasons for nonparticipation in all day programs (Source: Parents Survey 2009)

### *Effects of All-Day Schools on Families*

Hence, even though all-day school has different intensities and different forms of obligation, the StEG study’s comparisons between students attending all-day versus half-day school show some effects. Returning to the hypotheses, I shall concentrate on the effects on workforce participation of women and on family life.

*Effects on workforce participation.* The StEG data show that all-day school participation has a positive effect on the work–life balance of women. All-day schools in Germany offer especially women the possibility of taking on or increasing gainful work—especially when children are attending elementary school. Figure 5 shows the employment status of mothers of children attending different grades of all-day and half-day school.

There are significant differences between mothers of children attending all-day and half-day school at all grades, with the largest difference in the 3rd grade. Whereas in the 3rd grade, 41% of the mothers of all-day students work full time and 24% do not (or at least only some hours a week), only 19% of the mothers of half-day students work full time, and nearly 48% do not work. In the higher grades, the differences remain significant but become smaller. The childcare function of all-day schools seems to be more important in elementary school. The parents themselves confirmed these findings. When asked directly about the effects of all-day school attendance on parents, they confirmed the effect on their work–life balance (Fig. 6).

It is particularly parents of 3rd-grade students who see an effect on their working life: About 44% entered into an employment because of the all-day school and 40%

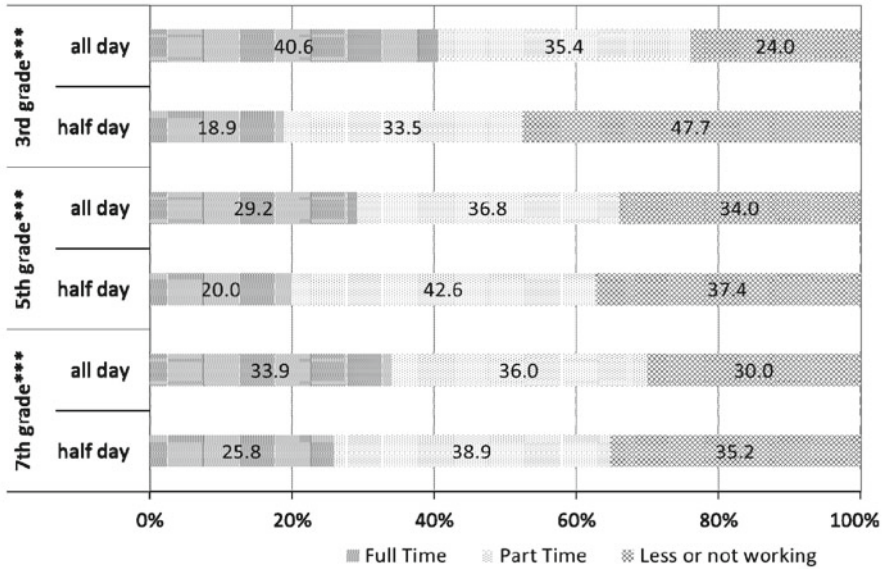


Fig. 5 All-day school participation and mothers' working time (sorted by extent of gainful work, in %) (Source: Parents Survey 2009. 3rd grade: n = 1,598, 5th grade: n = 4,238, 7th grade: n = 4,427. \*\*\*p < .001)

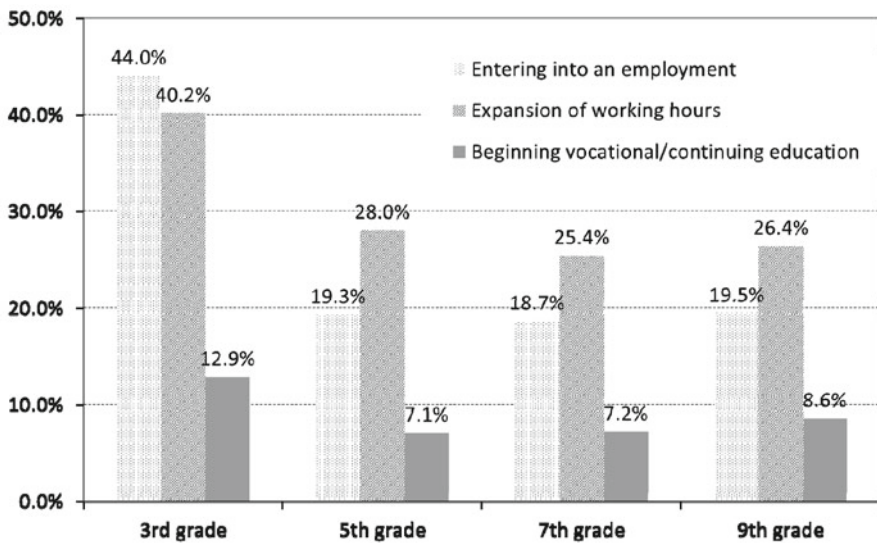


Fig. 6 Effects of the child's all-day school attendance on parents (parents' view, in percent) (Source: StEG Parents survey 2009. 3rd grade: n = 974; 5th grade: n = 2,725; 7th grade: n = 2,343; 9th grade: n = 1,550)

**Table 2** Development of family activities by all-day school participation

Frequently together		2005 (%)	2007 (%)	2009 (%)	N
Lunch*	No all-day school participation	72.0	76.5	72.6	669
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	67.8	67.1	64.9	951
Conversations	No all-day school participation	47.9	44.2	47.5	672
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	47.9	44.1	44.2	951
Excursions	No all-day school participation	28.7	24.3	19.5	663
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	29.4	25.1	17.8	959
Sitting together	No all-day school participation	30.1	27.7	22.5	667
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	33.5	28.4	20.6	949
Hobbies	No all-day school participation	17.5	16.3	13.1	662
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	20.2	16.0	11.7	950
Watching television together	No all-day school participation	39.8	49.9	42.5	659
	All-day school participation at all measurement points	42.3	48.2	37.3	953

Note: Only students who were surveyed three times,  $n = 1,620$

Source: StEG Students survey 2005–2009 (Panel)

\* $p < .001$

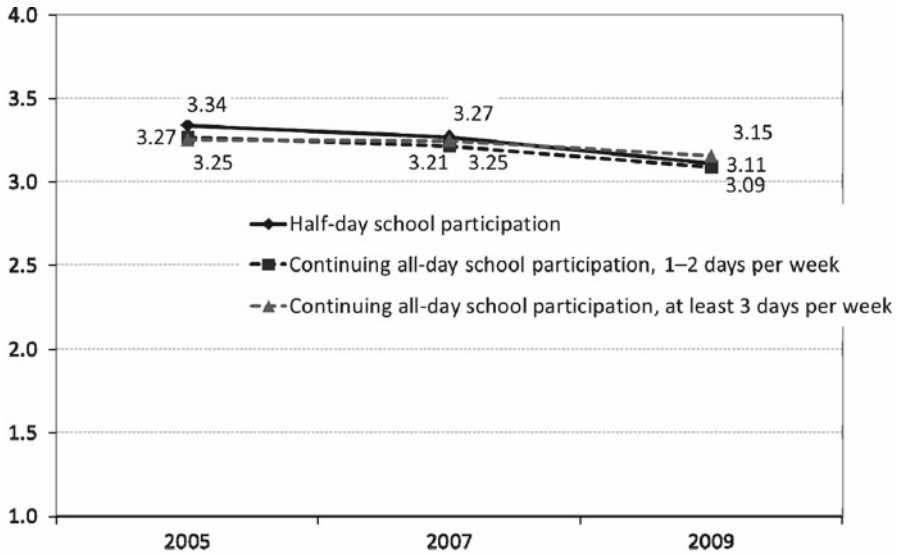
extended their working hours. About 13% started or continued their vocational education/study. As before, these effects become smaller in the higher grades, but extending working hours is still an important effect for about one-quarter of parents.

Hence, the StEG data seem to confirm the anticipated relationship between all-day schools and workforce participation of women, and that a higher number of school hours (with guaranteed lunch) can increase the time of gainful work of mothers.

*Effects on family life.* One of the concerns of conservatives in Germany has been the fear that all-day schools will alienate parents and children. Given the low intensity of participation, there might not be much reason for this fear, and the StEG data show no negative effects for this point. Looking at family activities, half-day students and all-day students did not report much difference when asked about the intensity of joint activities with their parents (Table 2). The only item revealing significant differences was—not surprisingly—having lunch together.

Looking at the relation between children and parents, the StEG data show a more positive effect of all data. Following the concept of family climate (Schneewind et al. 1983), the children were asked about their communication and their relationship with their parents. A 5-item scale for family climate was formulated with 4-point ratings (Fig. 7).





**Fig. 7** Development of family climate depending on intensity of participation in extracurricular activities at all-day schools from the children’s perspective ( $n = 1,604$ )

The figure shows a comparison of the development of three different groups of children over 4 years: (a) students who attend their school half day; (b) students who attend their school all-day, but extracurricular activities only up to 2 days a week; and (c) students who intensively attend both all-day school and extracurricular activities. As in other studies, the students’ view on family climate becomes more negative as they grow older. But it is interesting to see that the smallest decline is found in students who attend all-day schools intensively. In other words, family climate develops more positively when the children attend all-day schools frequently than when they attend only sporadically or not at all (see, in detail, Zuechner 2011).

Even if one tries not to overemphasize these results, the picture is that—under given circumstances—whether children attend school half day or all day makes no big difference to family life.

## Conclusions

To draw conclusions from the different findings, it becomes evident that working times, family time, and school time are related. It seems as if the relation between social policy and education helps us understand and explain the international differences in school time and workforce participation of parents more effectively than

welfare regime types. All-day schooling—according to one finding—leads to more time for better workforce participation of women compared with attending half-day schools, and, in Germany, this is a positive effect of the joint efforts to develop all-day schools.

Family life, on the other hand, is influenced only partly by school time. In the German situation, in which there still is concern among parents about their relationship to their children, the StEG data show that if children spend more time in school, this does not lead to less family life and weaker family relations. In contrast, there is a (small) positive effect of intensive all-day school participation on the family climate, probably due to fewer conflicts between parents and children.

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# Ideas of Family and Concepts of Responsibility at All-Day Schools

**Sabine Andresen, Lena Blomenkamp, Nicole Koch, Martina Richter, Anne-Dorothee Wolf, and Kathrin Wrobel**

The all-day school is currently being discussed as an opportune and appropriate response to changing societal needs. Both politicians and scientists see its expansion as a means to address the need to not only increase female employment rates but also counter social inequality in the education system. German policymakers view the all-day school as a major way to support a reconciliation of family life and labor market participation, to respond to changing gender roles and the growth of different family lifestyles, and simultaneously to try and counter the impoverishment and marginalization of many families in the country. Against the background

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of these processes of societal transformation, there are signs of changes in traditional familial responsibilities and institutional orders. Currently, these are being discussed as a “shift in the borders” (Kolbe et al. 2009, p. 151, translated) or as a “breaking down of the borders” delineating responsibilities on the level of education, care, and child-rearing institutions (Fegter and Andresen 2008, p. 832) marking the functional relation or the societal division of labor between the family and the school (Schlemmer 2004, p. 26). Our qualitative research project asked about the potentially new relation between family and institution in the all-day school. This chapter presents its theoretical framework and selected findings. It focuses particularly on elementary school, because elementary school children are still particularly dependent on parental support. The question we are asking here on the basis of longitudinal findings on all-day schooling in Germany is whether and how new controversies are emerging over the responsibilities of the school and the responsibilities of the family (Holtappels et al. 2007; Züchner 2007, p. 314). Our empirical findings deliver knowledge on how far it is necessary to assume a reorganization or a new mixing of the public and the private in Germany and a shift in responsibilities within the context of the current economic crises and ongoing welfare state transformation processes (Richter et al. 2009). This is then accompanied by the question regarding how the actors involved (i.e., the parents and the professionals in all-day schools) themselves consider where differences may be found, particularly in the concepts of responsibility and the ideas of family, and how they are negotiating them.

The reorganization diagnosed here should not just be conceived as a shift from private to public or from a familial to an institutional rearing, education, and care of children. It is far more the case that this restructuring is impacting on the meaningful content of the triad of education, care, and child rearing (Honig 2011, p. 190) in that, for example, issues in familial and nonfamilial education, care, and child rearing are becoming one “tile in the mosaic of parental strategies to promote the education of their children” (Honig 2011, p. 192, translated). Such strategies are always based on ideas about what constitutes a “good childhood.” Although our interviews allowed us to reconstruct various images of a “good childhood,” not all of these images are recognized as such. Accordingly, one major question is who has the power to determine what is a “good childhood” and what is “good child rearing” in the relation between school and family.

Time policies also become subject to negotiation as a result of a restructuring of private and public, that is, how the distribution of time spent on rearing, educating, and caring for children should be organized between the family and nonfamilial authorities—an issue that always has to be viewed in the context of economic, political, legal, and institutional conditions and interests (Allemann-Ghionda 2009, p. 200).

The discourse on setting up the all-day school has taken two main directions: First, it has discussed both the potential and the real shift in traditional responsibilities in the relation between the family and the school. Second, it has led to a completely new focus of attention on the educational significance of the family for children (Ecarius and Wahl 2009). Compared to 20 years ago, today’s parents are required to

invest far more in the education of their children. Hence, despite the expansion of all-day schools, which take more time outside school away from children, attention is now focusing on the family as a central life domain for children's education processes and as a location of informal education that takes completely heterogeneous shapes and forms (BMFSFJ 2005a, b; Lange and Xyländer 2011; Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2006).

These changes are also joined by the call to open up the school more to familial lifeworlds and increase the involvement of parents. In light of these dynamic processes, we use the concept of "fit" to conceive the relationship between the school and the family, drawing particularly on the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1973; Helsper and Hummrich 2008; Helsper et al. 2009).

## The Fit Between Family and School

In principle, school and family are "considered to be essentially different and noninterchangeable domains of education" (Helsper and Hummrich 2008, p. 372). School focuses essentially on imparting subject-specific content in more strongly role-related, universalistic and specifically distant types of relationships. Families, in contrast, are shaped by intimate, emotional, and particularistic relationships and closeness (Helsper and Hummrich 2008). Nonetheless, overlaps have to be assumed between familial and school relationships with, for example, children trying to attain a closeness to professionals or also professionals striving to build up emotionalized and close relationships to children. However, in principle, the relation between school and family in this structural and functional perspective is conceived ideally to be harmonious and complementary (Kramer and Helsper 2000). School and family as counterposed socialization and education spheres accordingly permit a comprehensive socialization of children specifically in light of this difference (Helsper et al. 2009).

Looking at this perspective of family and school as contrasting locations of socialization with its assumption of a "harmony through difference" (Kramer and Helsper 2000, p. 208), it nonetheless has to be pointed out that such a strict separation of the two domains of education and their essentially different social logics can lead to a tense relationship. This tense relationship and the "foreignness" of the one for the other have sociostructural determinants (Helsper et al. 2009, p. 35). They also (re)produce themselves specifically through the education-milieu-specific rules and orientations that predominate in either the family or the school—that is, that fit between the two locations that decisively determines a child's academic success. The fit or the possibility of integration between family habitus, forms of capital, and milieu-specific education strategies on the one side and the school habitus or education habitus along with the academic demands of the school on the other side are decisive for children's academic careers—as many German-language and international studies have documented impressively in recent years (Betz 2008; Büchner and Brake 2006; Ecarius and Wahl 2009; Jünger 2008; Lareau 2003; Nogueira 2010;

Vincent and Ball 2006; World Vision 2010). The school possesses a central significance for the future options and the social placement of children, and it is generally the only conduit through which parents can ensure their children's future chances. This strengthens the opportunities for the school to exert its influence and power over the family (Helsper and Hummrich 2008, p. 371). It is easier for the intermediate and higher education milieus in particular to ensure and achieve the educational success of their own children because of the compatibility between the school and the family habitus. Children within these milieus find it less difficult to translate the cultural practices of their family habitus into academic achievement, because it corresponds more closely to the demands of the school, and, in this sense, they are able to achieve a fit (Ecarius and Wahl 2009, p. 27).

The idea of counterposed socialization domains and thus of a complex and tense relation between school and family also has been criticized in terms of a potentially systemic dominance of school lifeworlds over family lifeworlds (Helsper et al. 2009). In this context, Tyrell (1987, p. 109, translated) talks about a tendency for the family to "overadjust to the school," by which he means that "the contributions of the families to the environmental system of the school may be far more complex in kind and extent than the performance output of the school flowing in the other direction toward the family." Hence, from this perspective, the family functions principally as a support system for the school, or the concept of the school makes the "functioning family" and its contribution into a precondition for academic success (Helsper et al. 2009, p. 37). It is precisely the model of the bourgeois nuclear family with its accompanying gender-coded time and care regimes and task allocations in the sense of "male breadwinner–female carer families" (Daly and Rake 2003, p. 139) that provides structures of family support that in many ways meet and correspond to the demands of the school. The emphasis on the family as a support system for the school is additionally reinforced particularly in western Germany by a powerful tradition of particularistic familial child-rearing ideas that view public education and child-rearing institutions as potentially threatening and weakening the family. As a result, they have been, and will long continue to be, confronted with far-reaching skepticism (Scholz and Reh 2009, p. 169). This skepticism is also encouraged by the opinion that only the family is able to guarantee or deliver the uniqueness of a child and her or his individuality, whereas the goal of the school predominantly addresses a higher level of adaptive activity (Andresen 2005, p. 7).

Over the years, the division of labor in society or the strong separation between family and school as locations of socialization and education has been criticized in several different ways from the perspective of progressive education. This has led increasingly to the established opinion that school and family should be linked more closely as locations of education (e.g., Holtappels 1994; Melzer 1997; Wild 2001). Currently, the call to open up schools to families, to permit a closer interweaving of familial and school lifeworlds, and also to provide pedagogic supervision and leisure-time provisions should be achieved particularly within the design of all-day schools (Holtappels et al. 2007; Soremski et al. 2011; Züchner 2007). Hence, the all-day school faces the demand to open itself up more strongly to families by integrating them more strongly as "indispensable experts" into the organization of the school.

This stronger orientation toward the attitudes, wishes, and also the acceptance of parents, and therefore “nonprofessional actors” in child rearing and education, has to be viewed as a more recent phenomenon in general within the context of all-day schools. It is one that has still hardly ever been studied systematically within an all-day educational setting (Allemann-Ghionda 2009).

The Bielefeld research project on “Families as Actors in All-Day Elementary School”<sup>1</sup> addressed this gap in research with a systematic examination of the relation between the family and public child rearing, education, and care. It applied a range of different methodological approaches to reconstruct the perspectives of parents or mothers, children, and school principals, teachers, and other educators. The following will sketch the research carried out in two waves of data collection before presenting selected findings and deriving conclusions from them.

## Comments on Methods

The first phase in the study on “Families as Actors in All-Day Elementary School” carried out participant observations in daily school life and during special events such as school functions, ethnographic interviews with children, and semistructured interviews with parents (in this case, particularly mothers) as well school principals, teachers, and other educators.<sup>2</sup> The all-day elementary schools were located in four of Germany’s federal states: Bremen, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Thuringia, and included both compulsory and voluntary (also known as open and closed) all-day school models.<sup>3</sup> Individual all-day elementary schools were selected not only on the basis of the general educational concept (compulsory vs. voluntary) but also on the social structure of the catchment area in order to include different social structures and ensure that the sample of parents was as heterogeneous as possible. Data were gathered in 3rd-grade classes of two all-day elementary schools per federal state. The children were generally 9 years old. The choice of 3rd-grade classes determined the sample of parents and professionals. Analyses<sup>4</sup> of the data from this first project phase revealed the significance of ideas of family and concepts of responsibility for the fit between the family and the all-day school.

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<sup>1</sup> Principal investigators: Sabine Andresen and Martina Richter. Participating researchers: Lena Blomenkamp, Daniela Kloss, Nicole Koch, Constanze Lerch, Anke Meyer, Florian Rühle, Anne-Dorothee Wolf, and Kathrin Wrobel. Student assistants: Julia Abraham, Maike Lippelt, and Lina Lösche. Duration: 11/2007–03/2011. The project was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the European Social Fund.

<sup>2</sup> In the first research phase, there were 64 interviews with parents or mothers and 24 interviews with principals, teachers, and other educators. Observations in the all-day elementary schools amounted to a total of 320 h.

<sup>3</sup> Whereas afternoon attendance is voluntary in the open schools, that is, parents can decide individually whether their child attends, all children are obliged to attend afternoon activities in the closed all-day school.

<sup>4</sup> Data were analyzed with the documentary method (Bohnsack 2008).



Against this background, the second phase of research and data collection focused on systematically reconstructing familial and professional ideas of family and concepts of responsibility. Qualitative data were gathered through group discussions with multiprofessional teams and intergenerational family interviews in North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia. The study sample consisted of two all-day elementary schools in each federal state that had already cooperated in the first phase of the project. In each school, a group discussion was held with a multiprofessional team containing the school principal, teachers, and further educators. In addition, nine intergenerational family interviews were carried out with families of a child attending a 3rd-grade class in one of the four selected schools. Four of the families came from North Rhine-Westphalia and five from Thuringia. The intergenerational family interview is an assessment instrument in which all members of the family participate. The research project selected this method in order to empirically grasp the contours of the potentially different subjective outlooks and appraisals of individual family members. These also revealed the relations between family members that developed in the interview situation; for example, it could be seen which ideas were shared without being questioned, in which areas conflicts could be seen, and how, for example, task allocations and responsibilities were negotiated between the generations or genders.

Generally speaking, samples both in our research (particularly during the first project phase) and comparable international research (Lareau 2003; Vincent and Ball 2006) prove to be composed mostly of women, that is, mothers—even when the studies explicitly asked to examine parents. Hence, it has to be noted that fathers are repeatedly underrepresented in contemporary qualitative research on how children grow up or are reared and educated.<sup>5</sup> This can be evaluated as indicating that mothers are generally highly relevant for all the decision-making, coping, and responsibility processes involved in rearing, educating, and caring for children. Provisional findings from the “Study on the Development of All-Day Schools” (StEG) underline this importance of mothers, because they—compared to fathers—express a much greater reduction in stress as a result of their children attending all-day schools (Züchner 2007, p. 323). Accordingly, it seems as if the distribution of tasks within the family essentially still follows the traditional pattern of gender role differentiation, indicating that a balanced distribution of responsibilities between fathers and mothers still seems to be infrequent or nonexistent. Women continue to bear the main responsibility for rearing, educating, and caring for their children. As a rule, they are also the ones who organize the times during which, for example, they are looked after by their grandparents. In this sense as the “managers of daily life” (Ludwig et al. 2002), mothers generally invest a great deal of time, energy, finances, and emotional support in promoting the intellectual, physical, and social development of their offspring (Vincent and Ball 2006). This result can also be viewed within the context of a growing public, political, and medial discourse on “good mothering” or “intensive mothering” (Vincent 2010, p. 110) that is currently

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<sup>5</sup> During the second project phase, we paid attention to ensuring the systematic inclusion of fathers in the study as well.

discussing the role and the responsibility of mothers for child development (Vincent 2010, p. 109). There is also an influential political debate on “parents” or “parenting,” but this debate conceals the fact that mothers are still “positioned as retaining the ultimate responsibility for child-rearing in popular discourses and moral understandings” (Vincent 2010, p. 110). The attention and concerns of policymakers focus particularly on poor and marginalized mothers who are accused of lacking “child-rearing competencies” or of failing to assume adequate responsibility for rearing their children (Gillies 2007).

## **Ideas of Family and Concepts of Responsibility at All-Day Schools**

The current all-day school reform process is transforming the relation between institutional and familial tasks into a topic of renegotiation involving readjustments and reciprocal attributions of tasks and responsibilities. This readjustment process is impacting on the key domains of family and school as locations of socialization and education. However, when both partners lack clarity over which are their own responsibilities and which tasks they have to fulfill, this can give rise to uncertainties, excessive demands, and disappointments (Helsper and Hummrich 2008, p. 372). The all-day school is increasingly taking over tasks that were previously linked to the family in both temporal and organizational terms and were also located traditionally within the family’s responsibilities. These include, above all, providing a midday meal, supervising homework, and creating opportunities to meet friends outside of school. In addition, institutional attention is being directed more clearly toward the child’s needs and well-being in the all-day school, particularly because parents or mothers are expecting a more individual orientation toward their children and also, in part, even demanding it.

### ***Ideas of Family***

Our research revealed that despite the current school reform process, the development of the all-day school as a whole reveals that actors continue to draw on a normatively powerful idea modeled on the “male breadwinner/female carer family” (Daly and Rake 2003, p. 139). All-day schools or the professional actors in them frequently continue to base their work on an idealized fit between families and school in which the family is expected to function as a support system. In the discourse on the all-day elementary school, family continues to be a “highly relevant and meaningful metaphor” (Scholz and Reh 2009, p. 174, translated) that not only parents and children but also professional actors seem to associate with norm assumptions about the ideal conditions in which children should grow up, the tasks that have to be performed, and who is responsible for these tasks. Various ideas about a “good” family and a “proper” child rearing are associated with the family as a normative

concept. There is an idealization of family or familial care as the optimal child-rearing framework, even though professionals frequently doubt the child-rearing competencies and the ability to organize daily life in “real” families. Our studies have found that “idealized” ideas of family serve as a backdrop that the interviewed families also referred to—although with different connotations—when formulating their positions. In other words, we find an offensive–self-confident compared to a defensive–self-stigmatizing response to hegemonic ideas of family. Whereas an offensive–self-confident response confidently rejects normative attributions that label one’s own familial life form (e.g., as a single-parent mother) as being deficient, the defensive–self-stigmatizing response seems to be dominated by the experience of being unable to live up to a socially powerful family ideal. Parents’ utterances then express the subjective impression of failing to match a socially recognized image of family, and this is finally associated with insufficient material resources.

“Idealized” ideas of family, which, for example, are mostly accompanied by the idea of familial childcare in the afternoon, generate legitimate and illegitimate reasons for taking advantage of the all-day provisions of the elementary school. In the eyes of the professionals, legitimate reasons are both parents having to work or the child living with a lone parent. Other parents are often confronted with a “not good enough” perspective in which they are “accused” of sending their child to all-day school merely for their own “comfort” (e.g., if they are unemployed). Parents perceive this very clearly and then gain the impression that they need to justify themselves before the school. Being addressed as inadequate in this way triggers a pressure to legitimize themselves that may well prove problematic and stressful for the parents’ relations and contacts with the school. The way parents see themselves as being addressed by the professionals or institutions decisively shapes the way they deal with the school. Being addressed as inadequate, for example, as a mother who is in need of help and unable to cope, does not encourage her to take up offers of help and support for her child, leads to defensiveness and distance, and thus encourages withdrawal from the institutional setting. Being addressed as deficient and being subjected to stigmatization makes parents feel the need to prove that they are able to rear their child. However, conversely—particularly in less privileged parents—this can lead to the emergence of a feeling of not being able to cope in parents who do not possess the necessary resources to counter such an accusation from the all-day elementary school. This places a decisive strain on any cooperation between parents and the school.

When we consider such ways of treating parents as if they are inadequate and how they lead the all-day elementary school to assign itself the task of having to compensate accordingly, we can interpret this as clear proof of how powerfully the ideas of family held by professional actors shape and guide their actions.

### *Concepts of Responsibility*

When asking the families in our research about their concepts of responsibility, two aspects became relevant: the question of responsibility within the family in the sense

of the division of tasks and responsibilities between the family members; and second, the question of the familial adoption and attribution of responsibility in relation to the all-day elementary school. The first aspect is significant, because the introduction of all-day schools has led not only to a shift in and a renegotiation of tasks and responsibilities in the relation between family and all-day elementary school but also to a general (re)structuring of daily family life, thereby raising the issue of the distribution of tasks within the family—also in gender terms. Nonetheless, the following will focus on the adoption and attribution of responsibility in the relation between the all-day school and the family.

The underlying concept of responsibility here describes a multilayered concept of relations and interrelations: “One is *responsible to somebody for something, before an authority, in relation to a standard and a system of norms*” (Lenk 1991, p. 61, translated). “Responsibility” is accordingly a concept that is defined by a norm of attribution. To be responsible to someone or something means that somebody is obliged to perform actions, tasks, and so forth for an addressee, and that that somebody has to justify her or himself in terms of standards, criteria, norms, and so forth before an authority that does not have to be identical with the addressee (Lenk 1991).

Therefore, our study is based on a prospective concept of responsibility. In contrast to the classic retrospective model of responsibility for what has happened in the past, in which the major concern is the attribution of guilt, the prospective concept of responsibility refers to the responsibility and accountability for what has to be done in the future in this sense of a responsibility for a task or a domain (Banzhaf 2002). Responsibility in the sense of responsibility for a task or domain thereby refers to aspects of the division and distribution of tasks and the regulation of responsibilities as well as the (reciprocal) attribution of responsibility not only within families (i.e., between the individual members of the family) but also within the all-day elementary school (i.e., between the individual professional actors), as well as between the family and the all-day elementary school in general.

With regard to the concepts of responsibility of the professional actors (school principal, teachers, and educators), our research focused particularly on the responsibility that the individual professionals in the all-day elementary school assign to themselves, which attributions of responsibility they perceive in the families, and what they themselves think about parental responsibility.

### ***The Difference Between Feeling Responsible and Accepting Responsibility***

Responsibility in the sense of being responsible for tasks or domains refers to the regulation of responsibilities and the distribution of tasks. It concerns *who* is responsible for *what* or for *whom*. Responsibility can be used here in both a value-free way in the sense of being in charge of, for example, carrying out a specific task; and in a moralistic, evaluative way in the sense of being responsible for the care of others.

*Responsibility* then refers to two levels: The first points to the recognition of responsibility; the second, to acting accordingly. *Recognizing* and *acting* are defined as one unit in the phrase “taking responsibility.” Hence, when parents take responsibility, they do this in such a twofold manner: On the one hand, they respond to what the child needs by seeing what a situation or a task requires, and which options are available to them as parents, and, on the other hand, they look to see what they can do (Banzhaf 2002, p. 148) and how they can and should respond. Whether recognizing responsibility is also followed by an action or a demand for action depends decisively on whether one *feels* addressed and therefore *responsible*. If one feels responsible, then one feels obliged to act in some way or another. The motivational element for parents to act therefore comes from the emotional attachment to their child. When individuals say “I feel responsible,” this expresses how they are socially enmeshed, their reciprocal dependencies, and their reciprocal attachments (Banzhaf 2002, p. 167).

When parents recognize their responsibility toward their children and also feel responsible, then they act accordingly by attending to their child and her or his upbringing, education, and care. This is how they take responsibility for their child’s well-being. However, the way they act can take very different forms: First, they can *take on or bear their responsibility* personally (in the sense of being responsible for specific tasks or domains) by, for example, performing the task of caring for their child themselves in the afternoons. Hence, they take responsibility by personally performing a task and transferring responsibility into concrete action. Similarly, they would be taking responsibility if they were to supervise the child’s homework by themselves. However, if specific tasks lie outside their personal action scope or action potentials, then parental action can take the form of transferring this taking of responsibility (in the sense of taking on a concrete task) to other persons. If they are unable to take on and carry out a task well themselves—such as afternoon childcare because they have to work, or promoting a specific skill in the child because they lack the necessary knowledge—they transfer these tasks to the professional actors in the all-day school.

*Transferring responsibility* to professionals is preceded by a parental decision-making process. First, parents determine which tasks they will transfer to the responsibility domain of the professional actors and which corresponding demands and expectations they will formulate and address to the school. Second, they have to possess confidence in the abilities of the professionals if they are to transfer responsibility to them (Banzhaf 2002, pp. 149, 158). However, even when some responsibility is transferred to professional actors, parents continue to take responsibility for their children and act accordingly. Specifically because they feel responsible for the well-being of their children and their upbringing, education, and care, they transfer a part of this responsibility to the all-day elementary school, particularly if they are unable to handle the demands and tasks appropriately themselves. This transfer of responsibility is taken in the belief that it is advantageous for their children when the professionals with their experience, resources, and knowledge take over some of these tasks. By formulating expectations and demands that they address to the all-day elementary school, parents continue to exercise their possibility of influencing

how these tasks are taken over and transformed into concrete (professional) action. This should also be understood as a form of taking responsibility exercised by parents.

However, our empirical analyses showed that the professionals interpret the forms of parental responsibility taking described here as a delegation of responsibility. Interviews with teachers and educators revealed how they assume that parents are shifting the responsibility for their children to the domain of the school. In the professionals, this elicits defensiveness and incomprehension. From their perspective, forms of parental responsibility taking are then conceived as parental “irresponsibility.” In their eyes, this obliges them to apply their professional skills in order to compensate for the familial failure to perform its proper tasks. Consequently, these are the forms of responsibility taking that they particularly interpret as parental irresponsibility and a “delegation of responsibility” to the all-day school. Currently, a major line of conflict is building up over these concepts of responsibility taking and delegating responsibility that determine the fit between families and all-day schools. Both on the side of the parents or mothers and on the side of the professionals, one can see increasing dissatisfaction as well as stress and irritation. Whereas the professionals are gaining the impression that increasingly more responsibility is being transferred to them and that parents are withdrawing from their “primordial” areas of responsibility, parents or mothers feel that they are receiving insufficient recognition of the ways in which they are taking responsibility, and they resent being addressed as deficient in their role as parents or mothers.

## Final Comments

The introduction of all-day schools in Germany is leading to changes in the traditional tasks of the family and school as locations of socialization and child rearing. The institutional and familial responsibility for rearing children is being renegotiated. Particularly in elementary school, it is necessary to consider which contributions to rearing, educating, and also caring for children should be performed by their parents or mothers and which should be performed by the institution of the school—while also determining what each side expects from the other. Within the current shifts in the borders between family and all-day school, our differentiated analysis reveals that societal ideas of the “male breadwinner/female carer family” (Daly and Rake 2003, p. 139) continue to exert a powerful influence. Against this background, many professionals in the all-day elementary school continue to expect parents or specifically mothers to provide support activities (e.g., supervising homework), and this model serves as the basis on which they formulate their perspective of “shared” responsibility taking. The parents or mothers we interviewed frequently showed their responsibility for the child by specifically transferring this responsibility to teachers and educators—not only because they considered them to have the resources and the necessary professional knowledge but also because they trusted them. The different concepts of responsibility to be found in parents or mothers compared to

professionals easily lead to controversies and deficits in recognition. This is something that will need to be analyzed more clearly if we wish to exploit the potentials of the all-day elementary school in the best interests of the child.

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