

## Introduction

### *When Care Is No Longer "at Home"*

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Let's face it: care no longer seems to be "at home," neither literally nor figuratively. It used to seem so simple. Politics was something that happened in public, care was something that happened in private. Many societies followed one or another form of this public/private divide. Aristotle famously distinguished *polis* and *oikos* (household) at the beginning of the *Politics*. The nineteenth-century American ideology of separate spheres gendered the public as masculine and the private as feminine. In this separation, nonpolitical concerns, including sentiment and love, became attached to the private. "Home is where the heart is," pronounce needle-point embroideries. Home is a "haven in a heartless world," intoned the psychologist Christopher Lasch (1995).

But this view of home as a place of comfort and care, marked off from politics, is a myth. While some (most?) homes do provide their residents with adequate, good, and even excellent care, not all homes are comfortable and caring. When the poet Robert Frost (1969) defined home as "the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in," he was

not speaking sentimentally and presuming such a home to be cozy. And "home" has come to have some meanings in recent years that are no longer attached to the meeting of caring needs.

The last one hundred years have witnessed a revolution in care. Care requires not only nurturing relationships, but also the physical and mental work of taking care of, cleaning up after, and maintaining bodies. Throughout the twentieth century, with the growth of more professional ways to understand human development, care has become more professionalized and left the household further behind. This professionalization of nurturant care (Duffy 2011) has led to the creation of many forms of institution outside of the home to perform caring duties that used to be met in the home: schools, hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, care facilities for disabled people, funeral homes, and so forth. At the same time, care also involves a fair amount of necessary "dirty work"—cleaning, preparing food, bodily care, removing waste—that, as it moves out of the home, creates a new class of people, mostly women and disproportionately people of color, who are increasingly left behind by economic growth in the bottom rungs of society (see also Glenn 2010). Parents now report that they spend more time with children than in the past, but they do not spend time doing the chores required for the daily work of maintaining bodies and things. That dirty work is left for others. "Care" is no longer the work of the realm of the household.

In the face of these changing meanings of care, much mischief has occurred in unmooring "home" from being a grounded and concrete way to start thinking about human life. Consider how home has shifted its meaning in two of the largest political changes facing the United States in recent years.

If we peel away the layers of greed at the heart of the world economic crisis, precipitated by the credit meltdown of 2008, we find something worth contemplating. The derivatives packaged and sold around the world, which turned out to be basically worthless, all rested upon a classic economic "bubble" in which prices—in this case, housing prices—had climbed beyond their possible real value. On the global market, what was being sold was a debt. On the local level, what was being sold to people was a promise that transforming their homes into greater debt was a good investment for them. These "subprime" deals rested upon the assumption that the houses people were buying (often with no income check or any realistic possibility that they could make the mortgage payments after a few years of reduced charges) would continue to increase in value at such

an astonishing rate that they would never have to face the fact that they were taking out mortgages far beyond their means to pay. By the time the mortgage payments became due, their mortgage brokers had told them, they would have sold their house for still more money and paid off this mortgage with the proceeds, with enough left over for another down payment. Fueled by the promise of easy money, encouraged by shady mortgage dealers and reckless banks, watching television series such as *Flip This House*, millions of people were caught in the hope that their houses would become a way to break into another economic status. People began to think of where they lived not as their home, but as their most clever investment. Everyone, it seemed, understood that they would never get rich working for a living. But now, for those lucky enough to begin to expand their assets within the bubble, the roof over their heads became a resource to exploit. Until, of course, the roofs all came crashing down.

Humans have a nostalgic attachment to their homes, "where," as Frost put it, "when you have to go there, they have to take you in." What does it mean that people ceased to think of their homes this way and began to think of them as investments? What convinced people to stop thinking of their homes as a place of safety and comfort, but to view them with an eye toward a calculated profit? Traditionally, as social scientists have explored, home is associated with warmth, a sense of comfort, a sense of being in the place where one can be oneself, and where one can regenerate one's energies (Windsong 2010). Now, a house was no longer a home but an investment. To make this switch, people had to start to think differently about themselves. One study of British citizens explored this point directly: cut out of the financial bonanza, people began to realize, they would no longer be able to live a good life simply by working for a living, or making a commitment to an occupation and developing a skill (Bone and O'Reilly 2010). Now one also needed to be a savvy investor, to play the market just right, and to expect that someone else would come along thinking the same way as you, but with less money, who would also be willing to invest. As "every man his own investor" came to dominate the economic landscape, nostalgic ties evaporated as people began to think of their homes as places for speculation. For those excluded, or too timid, to take a chance on the open market and change homes, their homes became a source of a different kind of cash flow through low-interest "home improvement" loans, which banks freely offered and which individuals took and used to pay for everything from capital investments to groceries. Consumer debt outpaced consumer savings. One way or another,

American consumers fell under the spell of seeing their homes as sources for revenue, and telling themselves that it was reasonable to act this way since their homes were, after all, increasing in value. Added to this illusion are the realities that real wages are stagnant, that pensions have been cut and continue to disappear, that finding good long-term employment has become an iffy proposition. Home as revenue became attractive as the hope for some economic security. People wanted to have money to spend, and in face of dislocations caused by economic and political uncertainties, they hoped that they could quell their anxieties with that one more thing, one more experience, one more set of "memories" that their borrowed money seemed to promise. This restless desire to acquire transformed how people thought. We can imagine how, in the style of a 1940s Looney Tunes cartoon, as Americans stared at their homes, the house became a gigantic piggy bank, and the ersatz mortgage and loan papers a huge hammer to break it open and get at the money. But as so often happened in those cartoons, when the deception ended, the broken pieces lying around on the ground had shattered not an illusion but something real: the historical and traditional value of owning one's home, in what President George W. Bush called "an ownership society."<sup>1</sup>

The economic crisis that began in 2008 brought this frenetic activity to an abrupt end. Banks were bailed out, but not the individuals who lost their homes or who now found themselves under the burden of a mortgage or home equity loan greater than the adjusted value of their house. While some banks are "too big to fail," individuals who had exceeded their household income had to bear responsibility for their actions. Now, as individuals begin to desert these mortgaged homes, as states and local governments suffer from lack of revenue and have to cut services to balance their budgets, the rippling waves of irresponsible behavior affect everyone. The most obvious scapegoat, as has been the case in the United States since 1980, is "big government," and the anger unleashed by this chain of events finds expression in the anti-government "Tea Party" movement—"taxed enough already." But the reality would place the blame differently, not upon government, but upon millions of people hoping to get ahead, and upon a vast network of banks, mortgage brokers, investment houses, and other businesses, operating on a global scale to take advantage of people's anxiety about their prospects for economic improvement.

What drives this clamor for "evermore"? Juliet Schor (1998, 2000) has suggested that Americans work too much and spend too much so that they can provide "more" for their children. In the past fifty years, the structures

and work patterns of American families have changed dramatically. Parents eager to raise their children well find themselves caught in a "time-bind" (Hochschild 1989, 1997), and they use money and things to try to make up for this lost time. Parents now report that they spend more time with their children, but that time is literally spent engaging in activities that are organized around the children's likes and dislikes. This is not the same as having the children engaged with their parents in adult activities such as cleaning and cooking. The end result is that children, except for scheduled times in which they share in activities with their parents, spend much of their time in the company of other children; for many teenagers, virtually all of their waking time is spent in constant electronic connection with other teens. But teens and their parents now find it hard to believe that these young people will be better off than their parents. For the first time, the next generation of Americans will likely be less well-educated and less likely to succeed than their parents. Americans are caught in a vicious circle of working harder, which takes more of their time and energy, and spending less time caring for their families. Then, in order to assuage their guilty consciences because they are caring less, they work more so that they can earn and spend more "making memories." No wonder the promise of "get rich quick" through selling one's home seemed so attractive. But there is no solution to this vicious cycle from within. The only way to end the need for more money and more stuff to substitute for time and caring is to begin to reshape delusional values of home as investment, of economic striving and success as the only value worth pursuing.

The attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, have also profoundly altered our sense of "home." Although attacks from abroad are not unprecedented in American history, nor are attacks from within, the scale of the September 11th attacks, and their occurrence at a time when Americans felt themselves to be the single hegemonic global superpower, was profoundly shocking. When President Bush reorganized the federal government to create the Department of Homeland Security, which is now the third largest federal agency in terms of workforce (Congressional Budget Office 2012), few objected to the use of the term "homeland," which in its most recent common usage had referred to regions of South Africa designated by the Apartheid system for indigenous peoples. The term itself seemed to capture the anxiety that what had been disturbed were not sovereign boundaries, "order," or "peace," but "home" itself.

There is something much more partial about defending a "home" as compared to defending a conception of sovereignty or "peace." Defending

home, "where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in," does not admit a challenge on the basis of judgments of right and wrong. It is, simply, home. The assertion that *our* home (but no one else's) needs to be free of violence and fear has resonated strongly in American life. Yet as wars continue in Iraq and Afghanistan, as Americans face the reality that their government has used and justified torture, as trillions of dollars have been spent, "home" seems to be less a place of security and more a place of anxious, unknown threats. Americans view their safety somewhat precariously; in a Pew Center survey in October 2010, 30 percent of Americans thought the threat of a terrorist attack was greater since 2001; another 41 percent thought the threat was the same; only 25 percent thought the threat had lessened. Economically insecure, vaguely threatened by terrorists, Americans seem to retreat from public life. Citizens thus sat out the elections of 2010; on average around 40 percent of eligible voters bothered to go to the polls in the midterm congressional elections (Roberts 2010).

These ways in which Americans are no longer feeling at home are disturbing in themselves, but they raise an even more serious concern: How can people claim to live in a democracy if their fears and insecurities begin to override their abilities to act for the common good? We are living in a time in which the unreal has a great deal of appeal. From imagining cowboys fighting off aliens, or Abraham Lincoln battling vampires, much in our contemporary commercial culture seems ungrounded. This is not so surprising. As care moves out of the household, "home" becomes ungrounded, disconnected from the realities of living our lives. When care becomes mainly invisible—mired down in a messy material world below the "meaningful" world of social media (where teenagers now spend most of their waking lives), people float away from what really goes on in a home. Home becomes a way, instead, to tug at heart strings, to make people overlook economic risks and imbibe political snake oil. It also invites people to retreat into their own families and implicitly suggests that there is no one else to help out, little "caring with" to be done. To understand what is happening to people now and how to move forward, it seems that the idea "starting at home," to quote the title of an important book by Nel Noddings (2002b) about care and social policy, may no longer be the right approach.

### The Need for a Democratic Care Revolution

What happens when care is no longer at home? The revolution in care institutions and practices that is already underway requires no less than

a companion revolution in political and social institutions and practices. For the most part, the scholars who have studied this question have been sociologists, economists, and public policy analysts. They have tried to answer this question by exploring how care is transformed when it begins to take up places in the market, in transformed families and other social arrangements, and in the state. As valuable as this work has been, it has not gone far enough. Using the metaphors and language of the market leaves an account of care incomplete. Only a holistic and politically grounded rethinking of care can adequately address the present situation.

Thus, one of the key arguments of this book is to call for a rethinking of the meaning of democratic politics. Democratic politics should center upon assigning responsibilities for care, and for ensuring that democratic citizens are as capable as possible of participating in this assignment of responsibilities. While in the past the assignment of caring responsibilities may have seemed to be beyond the proper reach and scope of politics, I argue here that, given the changing nature of caring, nothing short of this reconceptualization of politics can address the political problems for democratic life that arise from our present accounts of care.

### *Care and Politics? Care and Political Theory?*

In making this argument, I am flying in the face of a number of assumptions that are usually made about care and about political life. Indeed, there are three standard kinds of arguments that deflect us from seeing the need for this democratic rethinking of care. In each of these cases, the argument rests upon an unwillingness to recognize how thoroughly we need to rethink where caring responsibilities should lie.

The first argument is that care is "only natural" and that society is better when only those who are "naturally" good at caring do the care work in society. Although this argument harkens back to Aristotle's description of "natural slaves" as tools to help others, recent ideological accounts of who in society is most caring make women bear the burden of care. Charles Tilly's (1998) work on durable inequality notes that once relatively small differences in status emerge within a social system, many other forms of social practice continue to reinforce these differences. Feminist and other critical scholars have long noted that naturalizing a phenomenon puts it beyond the possibilities for change. Calling "care" naturally feminine has had precisely this effect, and it has also served to mark as "feminine" groups of men who are seen as caring. Within economics,

debate is ongoing about the proposition that care work does not need to be well paid, since caregivers receive non-monetary rewards because caring matters so much to them.

In order for this argument to be true, though, care must be something that some people naturally do rather than others. However, while some people may seem more caring, practices of caring can be cultivated.<sup>2</sup> It is also the case, as we will see in chapter 3, that sometimes care practices are labeled differently in order to maintain the gendered ideologies about "care" as something primarily for women. In short, the claim—that caring is "natural" and its own reward for some people—is more ideological than real.

The second argument is the opposite one to the view that care is natural and therefore immune to market forces. This argument says that care is like any other good or service, and its distribution is best left to the market. If people want care, they will seek it out, and they will pay what it is worth to them. Thus, by this account, care is not a public matter but a private one.

While much care work is distributed through market mechanisms, and this pattern will be discussed at length in chapter 5, it is also a mistake to think about care only from a market perspective. There are several reasons why this is true. The market presumes, after all, the existence of a rational and able consumer. For a variety of reasons—incapacity, age (think of the very young or the very old), the disparity in knowledge between expert providers and less-knowledgeable clients or consumers (which produces the rules for market operation that presume *caveat emptor*)—the market model cannot be applied to all forms of care. Another problem with using the market to price care is that many forms of care are extremely expensive and do not adjust well to the market. If a society "costs out" all of the informal care that its members provide, it will discover a huge economy that is not accounted for in economic life (Folbre 1994, 2001, 2009; Waring 1988). Nor does care behave like other commodities on the market, since many of the costs of caring cannot be reduced through new technologies. Much of the cost of care suffers as much from William Baumol's "cost disease" (2012) as does playing chamber music (his original example): one simply cannot care without humans to do the caring (despite recent efforts to substitute robots for humans in such activities as bathing frail elderly people [Davenport 2005]).

The third argument takes the view that we can continue to muddle through. Relying upon existing forms of public policy, using the global-



ized market in care labor (McGregor 2007; Weir 2005; Yeates 2004; Parreñas 2001), the existing care crises can be solved by incrementally adjusting public provisions and private costs, and by relying upon globalization to provide new sources of caring labor. The problem with this argument, which goes somewhat beyond the scope of this book, is that it ignores the injustice, unfairness, inequality, and lack of freedom in both current and proposed future arrangements. This book is designed to show that this assumption is pernicious because it leaves distorted forms of caring responsibilities in place that ultimately undermine the requirements of a democratic society.

Many scholars will also resist the claim that care is a matter for political theory. Even if there is some set of concerns to address within public policy, why should care be a subject of political theory? Does not the expansion of the category of "the political" weaken its meaning? Given the nature of how laws, states, and social scientists have divided up the realms of social and political life, it is not so surprising that the care revolution, and its impact on how people live, has not been systematically thought about by political theorists. After all, previous theoretical starting points, from Roman law to Talcott Parsons, presumed that care was best relegated to the private sphere. Politics concerned only what was public; the private sphere was a world of unequal relations that could never be political (Aristotle 1981). Or, private concerns about sexuality, marriage, and nurturing children were pre-contractual (Pateman 1988). Or, the repetitive work of "animal laborans" preceded the realm of freedom (Arendt 1958). Even when democratic theorists began to think about the ways in which women had been excluded from politics, their solutions did not at first change the care-is-in-the-home formula—they simply asserted that one should extend notions of equality (Mill 1998 [1869]) or justice (Okin 1989) to the household.

But when "public" and "private" themselves become reconfigured vis-à-vis the needs for human care, as has happened with the care revolution of the past century, a more fundamental rethinking of these fundamental political categories becomes necessary. Absent such a rethinking, the market and public policy, following their own logics, fill in. This is not to say that the market and public policy analyses of care that are offered are entirely inadequate. There is much to learn from these analyses, and they inform much of the following discussion. As institutions for care emerge in the market, it has made sense to use market and public policy analyses to think about them. But to follow the logic of the market, or of policy,

rather than to start from the logic of care itself, means that the basic questions about the nature and purposes of care never arise. Most profoundly, it occludes a question that has never been adequately answered: How should care happen in an inclusive democracy?

After all, care really is a problem for democracy. Taking care of people and things is often unequal, particularistic, and pluralistic. There is no universally equal solution to the problem of care needs. Indeed, care often seems to be highly non-democratic, especially if one presumes that care professionals know more than care receivers about the best way to care. Or, if one presumes that care receivers are dependent on others, it seems difficult then to return to a framework that presumes that people are independent. As mentioned earlier, and discussed at length in chapter 2, throughout most of human history the assumption prevails that unequal care is not a worthy part of political life.

As the historical records shows, if one wishes to exclude some people from participating in democratic life, then the problems of care are easily solved. One assigns the responsibilities for caring to non-citizens: women, slaves, "working-class foreigners" (More 1965 [1516]), or others who are so marked. But once a democratic society makes a commitment to the equality of all of its members, then the ways in which the inequalities of care affect different citizens' capacities to be equal has to be a central part of the society's political tasks. And furthermore, making care into a political concern will improve not only the quality of care, but also the quality of democratic life.

It would be a profound mistake, though, to expect the argument here to somehow re-create the sentimental home or to find a substitute for it. Politics is, after all, about people's pursuits of their interests and about power—and power and interest permeate all collective human activities. Since care is a fundamental feature of collective human life, there is no way to remove power and interest from affecting how care practices are organized. My goal is not to carry the banner for care in the hopes of eliminating conflict. Instead, my goal is to insist that at present we spend a lot of time arguing about the wrong things. What really matters, and what can be best expressed in terms of our values, has to go beyond the current default of explaining all aspects of human life in economic terms. Instead, the key question should be: How, at every level, can we engage in caring with one another? Precisely what this means, how care can be a ballast against overly market-oriented thinking, will be discussed in the chapters to come.

Indeed, rather than being nostalgic for a (mythic) golden age of care, this work is optimistic about care's potential in transforming current democratic life. Given the past exclusion and current inadequacy of incorporating care into political life, people are not wrong to think that somehow, what matters in their lives is not the stuff of politics. Although the concerns of political care are highly contentious, nevertheless to re-introduce the questions of care into the political agenda may act as a catalyst for more democratic ways of life. By demanding democratic ways to resolve the questions of how a society can best meet its caring needs, I hope to refocus attention not only on the importance of care, but also on the promise of democracy as kind of political system.

### How to Think about Care More Democratically; How to Think about Democracy in a More Caring Manner

How then, are we to think about care more democratically? The central concern, it becomes clear, is the need for a more nuanced account of responsibility. The book is divided into three parts. Part I lays out the theoretical framework for conceiving of caring democracy. The first chapter describes the ways in which the problems of the current "care deficit" and the current "democracy deficit" are related to one another. The chapter also explains the meaning and scope of "care" for this work, and explains that "caring with" is an essential phase of democratic forms of caring. This leads to the claim that democracy is about assigning caring responsibilities. In chapter 2, the question of responsibility is viewed in this light. Drawing upon the work of Margaret Urban Walker, it offers an alternative metaethic—an ethic of responsibility—which, I argue, properly understood, requires a commitment to democratic values and to caring with others in order to evaluate how citizens assign responsibilities to one another.

In her revision of John Rawls's principles of justice, Eva Kittay (1999) makes a compelling argument for including care for caregivers as one of the basic principles required for a liberal democratic order. Daniel Engster (2007) also derives an admirable set of recommendations from principles that he thinks follow necessarily from the nature of care. The approach that I shall take here leans more heavily on the democratic than on the liberal concerns of contemporary political life. While it is possible for a philosopher to make arguments about what and how the values of care should best be inscribed into a democratic way of life, my goal here is to

create a way for such decisions to be made democratically, by the people themselves. This approach requires a different kind of political philosophy or theory—not one that is prescriptive in all of its details, but one that sets out the parameters for how citizens might do this work concretely. This approach is not new; it bears a resemblance to the kinds of invitations to public participation that pragmatists such as Jane Addams and John Dewey raised in the twentieth century (Esquith 2010; Fischer, Nackenoﬀ, and Chmielewski 2009; Sarvasy 2003).

The next part of the book, consisting of chapters 3–5, describes “how we care now.” I begin by distinguishing between men and women, who each take a turn in chapters 3 and 4, respectively. In so doing I do not want to reproduce the view that care is only about gender, because care is also about race, class, and other ways of separating citizens into more and less important groups. Nevertheless, gendered language, assumptions, and frameworks remain a critical way in which care work has been distinguished. Focusing on masculinity and femininity in relationship to care allows us to see different and crucial elements of the complexity of our current non-system of care. Chapter 3 considers how men do engage in caring activities, but these activities are never described as “caring” and thus reinforce a gendered separation that permits care to be feminized and devalued. Chapter 4 explores vicious circles of unequal care in which the standards of “intensive mothering” are shown to divide up by class. Only upper-middle-class and middle-class women seem to care well for their children. Chapter 5 returns to the neoliberal view of care as a marketable commodity. In these three chapters, though it is somewhat artiﬁcial to do so, I make three parallel arguments in basic concepts in democratic political theory that change their demeanor when we look at them from the perspective of caring with other citizens. In chapter 3, I describe the effect of men’s exclusion from care on “freedom.” In chapter 4, on women’s place as mothers in a competitive market economy society, I describe the effect of these practices on our value of equality. In chapter 5, on the market, I consider an account of justice if society uses the market to organize care.

Chapters 6 and 7 offer how we might start to think differently about a caring democracy. Chapter 6 considers how practices and institutions of care can be democratically organized and informed, and indeed, how improving the democratic quality of caring stands as another way to think about the value of democracy itself. Chapter 7 describes how changing the value of care in democratic societies permits us to recast issues of inclusion, dependency, and creating more just democratic societies.

In short, then, this book makes three arguments. First, our social, economic, and political institutions no longer fit with our modes of caring and need to be revolutionized. Second, in a democratic society, the way to rethink institutions and practices (even those that previously have seemed "apolitical") is to rethink them democratically. Third, caring democratically requires a democratic process by which citizens are able to care with their fellow citizens. Yet as they learn to renegotiate caring responsibilities, citizens' care for democracy solidifies and reinforces the democratic nature of society.

In this book, I do not wish to offer detailed specific policy recommendations. In part, the role of a political theorist in a democracy should not be to substitute one's own ideas for political discussion in the society as a whole, but rather to propose the issues and ways in which ongoing discussions and political negotiations should proceed. My hope, then, is to clarify how citizens caring with one another can reshape our political life.

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