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Usable Pasts:

Caregiving as a Public, Physical Matter

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Abstract

In this working paper, I argue that caregiving is a public, physical matter, as well as a personal and social need. The principal example is a ten-acre site in North Oakland that the Ladies' Relief Society developed into an important node in the city's landscape of charity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I review the history of the site and discuss present-day controversies concerning the restoration of the Studio One Arts Center to show that we have a "usable past" concerning caregiving. Attending to the changing landscapes of urban architecture gives a useful insight into the state of social and civic infrastructures designed to meet the needs of contemporary working families. On this large parcel of urban land, material culture — the architecture of the place – instantiates and celebrates public solutions to private needs. Taken together, the buildings in this setting meet a variety of needs associated with the life cycle of contemporary working families, drawing people from all walks of life to a place that was once segregated along racial lines. Nevertheless, the buildings reveal the contours of class, gender, race, and other social relations that continue to affect caregiving in the present day (as they did historically). The history of the site, particularly the story of Studio One, also sheds light on the causes and potential solutions to the much-touted decline of civic infrastructures in contemporary American society.

The past . . . is a reservoir
from which we can replenish our own emptiness,
that, so far from being the ever-vanishing moment,
it is the abiding heritage in a community's life.
— Lewis Mumford, 1925*

Prologue

In 1910, Margaret Byington opened the final chapter of *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* with an astute remark. "I have referred frequently to the ways in which the one industry in the town through wages, hours and conditions of work limits the fulfillment of the family ideals," the former district agent of Boston's Associated Charities reminded the readers of the fourth volume of the prodigious *Pittsburgh Survey*. "This is not because the industry sprang up like a wicked ogre to carry on depredations among the townspeople," Byington maintained, "but because the employment it offers is the economic basis both of the household life and the town life; it makes both possible; and the terms and conditions on which it offers this employment must directly affect the everyday living of both" (Byington 1910:171).

With this comment, Byington underscored a main point of her particular study and one that remains worthy for students of cultures of care to recall in our own time, also a period of rapid urban growth and social change. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was clear that industrial capitalism had profoundly altered the landscape of the American city, with the effects of this political-economic system reverberating in public places and in private life, most importantly to Byington, within the family itself. In grand settings, the streets and squares of modern cities, "all that is solid" seemed to "melt into air," Marshall Berman has argued, borrowing the phrase from Karl Marx to suggest the overwhelming magnitude and tumultuous pace of modernization and consequent effects on culture, economy, and urban space, especially at the large scale of physical organization (Berman 1988). Byington, like several other survey researchers in Pittsburgh, scrutinized the impact of industrial capitalism on ordinary people and their settings, and she directed her research so as to ameliorate the consequences, taking the everyday needs of working people and their families as her special concern.[1] The men who "turn daily from twelve hours in the din of the huge mills to home, supper, a smoke and bed" did not earn a "living wage," the reformer argued, linking her definition of economic justice with an

explicit cultural value (Byington 1910:vii). In Byington's view, a steel worker needed to earn a higher salary so that his family could more easily live according to mainstream domestic ideals. Even though white working-class mothers in Homestead did not often work for wages outside the home, the need to augment a male breadwinner's income pervaded everyday life in the industrial town, for the families of "labor aristocrats" and common laborers alike. Children worked, often in factories, and mothers opened their small, wooden dwellings to roomers and boarders, much to the consternation of reformers who opposed the practices on moral grounds (Kleinberg 1996:95-98).[2]

As a solution, Progressive reformers of Byington's and subsequent generations favored taking a public approach to social change, endorsing a method that was at once expansive in its political ambition and quite restricted by ideological conviction (Anderson 1996:119-120; Kleinberg 1996:100-103). Holding middle-class domestic ideals in high esteem, reformers proposed that the government actively nurture those values through taking on a caregiving role, so to speak.[3] In the reform view, new legislation (various sorts of progressive public policies) could mitigate the devastating consequences of unfettered industrial capitalism on the daily lives of working people and their families and simultaneously ensure that one domestic order would prevail in American households, regardless of social class. That was the single-earner family, a family where work was divided along gendered lines, with men working for wages outside the home and women performing all domestic tasks within it, including giving care. I call attention to a spatial sense, an implicit design that shored up this approach to reform and its ties to a gendered political vision. Inherent in the formulation is the supposition that public policy (legal rights and the law) ought to be the link between individual families and the state, the lifeline, the humane tie that facilitates social improvement at the fine-grain scale of urban organization. Conceptually, this tie between public and private life was thought to be invisible, consisting as it did of social policy, but progressive reformers expected it would be discerned through practical change, on the ground of American cities. Enlightened public policies — especially better wages for men and pensions for worthy widowed mothers — would improve family and civic life, reformers argued in the Progressive Era, by enabling all mothers to retain a maternal, domestic

identity and work within the home, as homemakers and caregivers, particularly with respect to their children.[4]

In fact and as is well known to historians and social scientists alike, reform opposition to maternal waged labor could not halt the practice in the first decades of the twentieth century, even as so-called "maternalist" values became embedded in the social policies associated with the emerging welfare state.[5] Across the nation, women, whether single or married, mothers or not, worked for wages before the *Pittsburgh Survey* was conceived, at the time it was written (and in Homestead, if they were African American), and certainly after the survey's publication, in rapidly increasing numbers (Kessler-Harris 1982:218, 228-229; Michel 1999:92-93). The practice was deeply tied to economic necessity and to changing expectations of women — to economy and culture at one and the same time — and it held consequences for the physical and social organization of cities. By the 1920s, just one decade after the *Pittsburgh Survey* was published, reformers reluctantly realized that the working mother (and as a consequence, the dual-earner family) had become a fact of life in the working-class neighborhoods of American cities. "In the grey stream of women pouring into our industries at dawn there are many married women, and here and there a mother of little children," Helen Glenn Tyson wrote in 1925, tacitly speaking of white working-class women. Previously, "her presence" in the workforce had seemed to be "a kind of 'social accident,'" Tyson suggested in the introduction to Gwendolyn Hughes' *Mothers in Industry: Wage-Earning by Women in Philadelphia,* "temporary, and of little public significance" (Hughes 1925; Tyson 1925:xiii). During the balance of the twentieth century, the social transformation that Tyson and Hughes observed rippling through working-class households in Philadelphia would come to affect families who lived in the wealthier districts and suburbs of American cities, and it continues to be pertinent at the dawn of this new century, as well. In the United States, "families in which both parents are working have become the majority," the *New York Times* reported last October, "even among the most traditional families: married couples with children" (Hochschild 1997; Lewin 2000:A-14).

The Argument

Almost one hundred years ago, women reformers recognized that the private needs of working families were a matter of "public significance" in American cities, to reword Helen

Tyson's phrase. Like Margaret Byington, Tyson's reform-minded, female forebear, and scholars now engaged in the study of work and family, I agree with that assertion and also maintain that it is worthy of further scrutiny, so that we may develop an expansive understanding of caregiving, one that includes the physical and spatial dimensions of human experience. Tyson did not define precisely what she meant by "public significance" in 1925, but she used a term with heterogeneous meanings and associations. In the first decades of the previous century, elites had perceived the public to be a righteous social force, capable of mediating the antagonisms of labor and capital in a disinterested fashion, a force that could work for "the public good" (Anderson 1996:108). Today, the word "public" can describe a group of people with a civic presence or political interest, that is, "the public"; it can explain a sensibility about urban life and culture, about wanting to be in and present oneself and one's needs in public settings, as in "the public sphere"; it can refer to law and regulation with a social goal, as in "public policy"; and it can indicate a kind of place or building, usually erected by the state for social or governmental purposes.[6] In this paper, I use "public" in another historically appropriate sense: to refer to buildings or spaces that were open to the public or met common needs, but were not necessarily owned by state authorities.

I do so because women's commitment to public caregiving has a physical history as well as a political and social one in the United States. Historians of women, social welfare, and public policy have made the latter point, most recently making clear the depth of the female contribution to the development of the welfare state.[7] The debates rage among Linda Gordon, Sonya Michel, Theda Skocpol, and other thinkers about social meanings and political consequences of women's activism during the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., Gordon 1993; Skocpol 1993). But, for the most part, historians and their friends in allied fields track progress with respect to caregiving by taking account of increased government activity, particularly at the federal level. Focusing on public work as political work, they analyze the growth of the much needed, invisible "lifeline" of economic and social support that I mentioned above and direct attention to the impact of women's activism on the fact *and* the substance of public policy in the welfare state. Thanks to the research just mentioned and the work of other scholars, such as Michael Katz, we recognize the gendered consequences of important

entitlements like “Aid to Families with Dependent Children” and the ideological ties of such policies to old-fashioned ideas about charity, dependency, and relief (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Katz 1996). We are also able to track change and loss in entitlements and changing constructions of gender, race, and class, as we witness the decline of the welfare state and the expansion of markets, with respect to care.

I have sympathy with those goals, and so the purpose of this paper is a related yet different one. I want to extract from the historical record another approach to caregiving: to spell out and evaluate a set of architectural strategies articulated by reform-minded women about a century ago. At the same time as women pressed for increased government intervention during the first decades of the twentieth century, some of them took heed of the needs of working people and their families by opening small- and medium-scale, privately administered, social institutions in ordinary neighborhoods. Sometimes the female institution builders, as I call them, were different people than women who favored political activism; in other instances, they were one and the same folk.[8] To be sure, antidemocratic systems of belief, master narratives long a factor in urban benevolence in the United States, constrained the imagination of these relatively privileged, well-off women. They perceived relief, a term used to describe charity distributed by public agencies or in public places, to be a means of enforcing discipline and expressing cultural authority, a common enough assertion. In addition, their charities were usually segregated by race, also typical at the time. Even so, the tangible take on the matter of urban caregiving — physical, visible, and rooted in the gendered, institution-building practices of nineteenth-century philanthropy — remains instructive for advocates of social change in our own time: it acknowledges that dual-earner families need caregiving services outside the home and debunks the argument about the “golden age” of private self-sufficient motherhood offered by conservative thinkers who claim that women’s work outside the home is a recent, deplorable, and reversible phenomenon. As I pointed out earlier, working mothers (and thus dual-earner families) did not suddenly appear in the American urban landscape after World War II, and, as I will go on to show, the needs of working people and their families influenced the shape of urban public culture in our country well before that time.

Starting in the nineteenth century and extending well into the twentieth, female institution builders drew on the concepts of "public building" that I mentioned above to give a physical profile to the caregiving needs of working families, who were then principally working-class families: they erected what I call a landscape of charity in cities across the United States.[9] Through my research, I uncovered one example of the landscape in Oakland, California, and since then I have come to appreciate that, through constructing charitable landscapes in ordinary neighborhoods, women created a useful, physical context for caregiving that was larger than the individual household (Gutman 2000). Accessible, gendered, and incrementally built, the female-built charitable landscape differed from place to place in American cities in that it contained a variety of loosely affiliated, nonsectarian philanthropic settings. In early twentieth-century Oakland, the landscape was made up of orphanages, old-age homes, free kindergartens, settlement houses, vacation schools, day nurseries, and YWCAs. At the time, settings such as these were perceived to be public places, even though they were privately owned, obtained funding from a wide range of sources, could restrict admission on the basis of need and perceived moral worth, and were often (although not always) segregated by race. These institutions were understood to *serve* the public, in this case, a public primarily composed of working-class women and children, and thus they were marked with class meanings, as well as gendered and racialized ones.[10]

Those characteristics helped to create a sense of this landscape as at once approachable and a place of privilege in the minds of its makers (builders and providers) and its audiences (users and workers) alike.[11] In addition, the buildings held important material features in common. Women usually started the building process by renting a standing building, often a house that was located in an ordinary neighborhood. Most often, the pragmatic institution builders selected that building type and locale because they needed affordable solutions and wanted to tie caregiving with potent, accessible emblems of propriety and domesticity. Over time, and usually after purchase, settings were altered, expanded, and otherwise physically transformed, becoming more evidently public places due to changes in size, scale, and decoration. Sometimes an initial building was changed so radically that what was an altered house appeared to have been purpose-built; in other cases, the original domestic cast of the

architecture was retained; and in still other instances, women decided to replace the initial structure with a new, purpose-built institution, so as to make the institution more prominent in the local landscape and accommodate new programs and growing clientele. In due course, the considerable amount of land that women accrued worked as seed crystals might in another context, providing an armature for the community-building efforts, associated with the emerging welfare state. Across Oakland, starting in the 1920s and continuing for a short while after World War II, the municipal government erected public schools, recreation centers, playgrounds, and public pools on or adjacent to sites that women had established for caregiving purposes earlier in the century and that were subsequently given to or purchased by the city. In the main, the newer facilities served Oakland's working families, as had been the case with many older ones, but they did not restrict admission on the basis of need, and most became racially integrated over time.[12]

Thus, earlier in Oakland's history, women created a potent physical armature for caregiving that was gendered, threaded with idealistic hopes for social betterment, and permeated with the effects of power, prejudice, and inequality. Even with those complexities, I take the approach to be an example of what the historian Casey Nelson Blake calls a "usable past," that is, physically usable with respect to providing sites for caregiving and metaphorically useful with respect to shedding light on debates about the political implications of care (Blake 1990:296). In present-day American cities and towns, contemporary landscapes of care bear some resemblance to older forms, although some institutions, like orphanages, are obsolete, approaches to caregiving have changed in old-age homes and day care centers, and new types of institutions have been created. Even though the rhetoric has shifted and some sites no longer exist, a mixture of public and private providers — the state and other nongovernmental organizations, like churches, voluntary organizations, and private charities — continue to run institutions that meet the needs of dual-earner families for care. An inventory would include pay-for-access institutions, such as old-age homes of varied types, day care centers, YWCAs, and YMCAs, and places where care is free or can be procured at minimal cost. Nevertheless, a sharp line divides provisioning in the name of private charity where recipients are, in effect, "means tested" and provisioning for all, as with parks, recreation programs, and public schools. This split is also present in public policy, dividing means-tested state provisions like AFDC or food stamps and

universal entitlements, like Social Security. Indeed, one recurring social policy issue concerns whether to make state care provisions (like after-school care, now on the public funding agenda) a matter of entitlement — available to all, as a public school is — or means tested. The latter strategy heightens class divides, which some historic institutions did as well.

I take an approach to thinking about caregiving that is not highlighted in current work-family literature, although the ties of urban charity, a form of care, to architecture and the urban environment have been quite important to social scientists historically, especially to sociologists.[13] Moreover, the female-built charitable landscape is at the periphery of my own field, architectural and urban history. Wealthy women relied on adaptive reuse, a pragmatic, process-driven, land improvement strategy, which initially depended on the work of ordinary builders, not architects, and articulated spatial values rather than principally visual or strictly architectural ones. Because women usually founded their institutions by inserting a charity inside a standing building, they did not hire architects to design monumental, purpose-built structures to begin with, although such structures could be added to a setting as needs changed and funds became available.[14] Clearly, there are advantages to selecting for study places and processes that have been set aside or ignored in traditional accounts. Sites at the edges of scholarly disciplines are "thick with culture," to paraphrase Viviana Zelizer, the economic sociologist, and they generate disputes and disagreements about the purpose and direction of research that can bring to life forgotten, very significant aspects of our past.[15] To give substance to these points, I examine one node in the charitable landscape, developed to meet the needs of working people and their families in Oakland (Figure 1). The node appeared during the early 1870s, when the Ladies' Relief Society purchased from J. E. Beckwith a substantial house and ten acres of farmland in Temescal, then about halfway between the Oakland and Berkeley city lines. This ambitious women's group, the first nonsectarian charity in Oakland, turned the dwelling into an orphanage and home for elderly women (Gutman 2000:100-101).

Scrutinizing historic, material responses to social problems, as well as collective action, takes us into wider cultural and political dimensions of caring. Throughout urbanizing California, elite women established private charities for groups defined as in need by virtue of their poverty and lack of family support. The institution builders also asserted that the physical fruits of their

social labor humanized the state's new cities and towns: the new institutions expressed a commitment to the public good and added a modicum of hard-won, feminized civility to the roughly hewn public face that characterized many municipalities on the Pacific coast of the United States at the time.[16] In Oakland, the well-off women, who proposed to establish a caregiving institution under the rubric of "charity," quickly learned that they needed to work very hard to bring the plan to fruition in their rapidly growing city. Voicing high-minded, class-bridging intentions, the society's managers pressed husbands and fathers for donations, trudged through muddy streets to solicit subscriptions and in-kind contributions, held many fund-raisers, and, once the establishment opened, augmented the work of paid staff by volunteering in the charity. That work offered important rewards to middle- and upper-class women, adding breadth and purpose to lives constrained by gendered social conventions. "Coming into personal contact with want and misery, we learn a larger sympathy with suffering humanity and find not only that there are nobler objects to engage a woman's mind than the latest Paris fashions," Kate Fisher, the society's recording secretary, wrote in 1872. "When the opportunity is afforded her, she is ready to give worthy and ennobling objects that energy, that executive ability, and that absorbing interest which when misdirected makes so many lives shallow, empty, and worse than useless" (Fisher 1873:9).

As Fisher's words suggest, the female managers of the Oakland charity willingly crossed the public-private divide, as well as the barriers of social class, to open and sustain a home for needy children and elderly women. The institution builders did not themselves turn to the sites for care, but they created a public solution to care in their city at a time when the state did not offer humane solutions to the problem.[17] "No brand of shame may mark them as pauper recipients of the public bounty," one of the charity's managers vowed, conveying her hopes for the indigent children who would come to call an institution home (Curtis 1873:11).[18] Even so, Protestantism prevailed, at the same time as the charity insisted it open its doors to clients of all faiths, and the building was racially segregated. The managers also offered aid only to those people it deemed "deserving," and they understood relief to be a means of instilling respect for obedience, order, and hard work in recipients, especially in working-class children. The Ladies'

Relief Society expected all clients who were capable, even elderly women, to work for their keep, and tasks were divided along gendered lines.[19]

In that and other senses, the landscape in Temescal resuscitated features of the almshouse, and the cross-class dimensions of the Ladies' Relief Society site were rife with other contradictions. Elderly women needed to pay a hefty entry fee to secure a bed, and parents were expected to contribute financially to their children's care as well. To be sure, mothers were able to turn institutions like orphanages into sites of "maternal invention," as Sonya Michel has argued, using them for emergency child care in times of need (Michel 1999:40-41, 43-46).[20] But availability of service and the physical proximity between social classes brought on by caring labor did not obliterate social distinction inside the Oakland charity and in fact could work to reinforce inequality in the face of economic need.[21] The white, working families who petitioned for assistance were members of the working classes; for the most part, the institution builders were Protestant women of privilege who could more easily set the terms and conditions of their work about the place. Although volunteer work was common, the managers hired a matron and other employees to be the principal givers of care.

In Temescal, architectural changes quickly gave physical substance to arguments made by the managers of the Ladies' Relief Society, favoring the use of charity to fortify social distinctions in an industrializing society (Figure 2). Overcrowding and ongoing shifts in philanthropic practice, which emphasized the value of rationality and specialization, encouraged the managers to replace the altered house with three purpose-built institutions: the Home for Aged Women opened in 1882, the DeFremery Cottage for Babies appeared in 1888, and a new Children's Home was quickly built in 1894, after a fire devastated the former Beckwith house. It had been used as an orphanage for older children. Thus, at the dawn of the twentieth century, the charity's setting appeared to have been modernized according to accepted norms (Katz 1996; Rothman 1971, 1980). It contained buildings with different designs, which were distinguished by function (kind of care) and social identity, as occupants were sorted according to gender and age. These buildings, with educational and hygienic purposes built into them, remained racially segregated as a matter of course, although not by official policy. That changed in 1915, when the

charity adopted a formal "rule" excluding African and Asian Americans from the Children's Home (Ladies' Relief Society of Oakland California 1916:27, 1917:30).[22]

What lessons can we learn from probing the history of a place such as this one? In an important article, "Why Nineteenth-Century Feminists Did Not Support 'Birth Control' and Twentieth-Century Feminists Do: Feminism, Reproduction, and the Family," Linda Gordon argues that excavating the past makes it possible to highlight assumptions about contemporary social practices and norms (Gordon 1992). She demonstrates that constructions of motherhood changed during the nineteenth century in relation to shifts in women's social, economic, and political positions, leading progressive women to reverse their opposition to birth control. Gordon's manner of presentation helps us to see the present in a new light, to realize that, using her example, birth control might make sense to women now, but voluntary motherhood made sense at another time.[23]

Similarly, attending to the changing landscapes of urban architecture can give useful insight into the state of social and civic infrastructures designed to meet the needs of contemporary working families. Historically, who has been involved in creating and sustaining spaces of public caregiving and with what framing beliefs? What are such spaces now? What outcomes do decisions taken about construction and property acquisition in a privately owned public setting hold for future generations? How do changes in the discourse about "charity" affect physical space? What are the contours of class, gender, race, and other relations when it comes to developing nodes in a landscape of charity? How have they changed over time in ordinary neighborhoods? Do the changes shed light on the much-touted decline of civic infrastructures in American society, variously ascribed to the entry of women into the paid labor force in greater and greater numbers, the falloff in state welfare provisions, and the expansion of markets? Are there different spatial markers of the privatized approach to care, as opposed to markers of a more genuinely public approach? In short, what continuities and changes do we perceive in a charitable landscape over time, and what consequences do they hold for our understanding of care?

One Node in Oakland's Charitable Landscape

We can find answers to some of these important questions by looking at the ten-acre parcel of property, once owned in its entirety by the Ladies' Relief Society and now a terrain with ties to three kinds of care, markets, civic, and state-based. First, I consider the site, overall, and then examine one building, the Studio One Arts Center, formerly used as the Children's Home. To meet pressing financial needs, the Ladies' Relief Society began to sell pieces of its property shortly after the turn of the last century. In 1922, the city acquired a large parcel, over three acres of land, which it used to enlarge the grounds of Oakland's new Technical High School. Through that sale and other fund-raising efforts, the charity raised enough cash to keep its operations afloat and replace the Home for Aged Women and the DeFremery Cottage (also known as the Babies' Nursery) with new, bigger buildings in the late 1920s (Clark 1939:37; Mott 1935: 64, 67, 72, 78, 83-84). During the 1940s, as orphanages fell out of favor with social welfare professionals and the charity lost its affiliation with the Community Chest, the Children's Home and the Babies' Nursery closed down. In due course, the Ladies' Relief Society sold those buildings: the North Oakland Area Council, a community group, purchased the orphanage and adjacent play yard and gave the property to the city, and the nursery was purchased by a private school (Grey 1949; Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989; "The Ladies' Home Society of Oakland" n.d.; "The Ladies' Relief Society of Oakland was founded . . ." n.d.).

Ten Acres in Temescal: Scrutinizing Public Solutions to Private Needs

Even with a mixed pattern of ownership, the setting in Temescal is a site where material culture — the architecture of the place — celebrates public solutions to private needs. Today, we find on the plot of land once owned by the Ladies' Relief Society assorted public buildings of different shapes and designs, used by families of varied social classes. The elegant, stucco-clad Mathilda Brown Home, a private, nonprofit residence for relatively well-off elderly women, is run by the Ladies' Home Society, the successor to the nineteenth-century charity. The Park Day School, a private day school, moved into the Babies' Nursery in the 1980s, a building similar in design to the Mathilda Brown Home. An Art Deco pool house and public pool (the first in

Oakland) sit next to the brick and shingle, city-run arts center, the former orphanage. Two public schools, the enormous Oakland Technical High School and the smaller Emerson Elementary School, are close by.[24] Taken together, the buildings in this setting meet a variety of needs associated with the cycle of a working family's life, ranging from child care and care for the elderly to education, recreation, and arts instruction. These facilities draw people from all walks of life to a place that was once segregated strictly along racial lines.

In itself, that achievement is cause for praise, coming at a point in American history when comments lamenting the sorry state of civic life in our society pepper public and private discourse. Jointly, the diversity of people and buildings in Temescal suggest that everyday spaces for sociality can exist in our cities and a shared community spirit can be expressed through the proximity of publicly and privately funded institutions that take care of our common needs. Still, we can find cause to temper the tribute, by taking a closer look at the social inhabitation and physical qualities of the place. Analysts of caregiving do not usually pursue the latter tactic when they speculate about the potential of care to prompt social regeneration and political reform. For example, in taking account of "care's power as a political vision," Joan Tronto speaks eloquently of care's humanizing virtues at the same time as she insists that care reveals the fault lines of inequality in modern society — one-to-one, with respect to human relationships, and at a larger scale, in terms of systems of government (Tronto 1993:168). In the main, Tronto's argument is compelling: we need to expand the boundaries of our moral and political reasoning to accommodate lessons learned from cultures of care. But she sets to one side scrutiny of the physical context in which care take place, considering "public" and "private" in terms of service providers, not with regard to actual, concrete places. Context does not figure in Tronto's list of focal points about forging an ethic of care (Tronto 1995:144). Even so, her comments about the dynamics of caregiving can illuminate some of the complexities and contradictions present in the architecture of the Temescal setting.

In large measure, the Temescal setting exists, as a collective entity and as a physically palpable, tangible public place, because of the aspirations of reform-minded women who sought to address their city's caregiving needs in the 1870s. The fact that the initial site is relatively intact — that three buildings once owned by the Ladies' Relief Society still stand and that this

node was not fully destroyed through private, profit-driven, speculative development or state-sponsored urban renewal — is telling. A node in a charitable landscape, like places in other kinds of cultural landscapes, "is not the product of a collective mind but of many minds working within established, although discontinuous, arenas of power," as Dell Upton (1994:63) has written. The persistence of this node gives us a clear clue about the ethnic and racial composition of North Oakland following World War II and the privileged class position that the Ladies' Relief Society maintained at the time. The association managed to keep (some of) its property intact at a time when other women's groups could not. In the 1950s and 1960s, slum clearance programs devastated the local landscape of charity in West Oakland, for example, when bulldozers razed many settings opened by other women's charities earlier in the century.

Even though that kind of erasure did not alter the Temescal landscape, the social and physical construction of the setting, once owned by the Ladies' Relief Society, did change across the last century. We can think of this node as a kind of museum that physically documents the results of shifts in caregiving ideologies and practices. For example, the rich, heterogeneous material culture of the place makes it possible to appreciate the dramatic transformations that occurred as caregiving moved away from the discourse of private charity, linked to wealthy women's public service, discipline, and relief, to other formulations. The state and private markets also entered the provider picture, as middle-class women, who entered the workforce in greater and greater numbers, had less and less time to give to benevolence. Thus, the Mathilda Brown Home and the Park Day School stand as substantial, physical markers of progressive approaches to caregiving *and* market-driven, privatized solutions. These buildings help us to perceive the effects of the rise of markets on contemporary cultures of care because it costs a great deal of money to attend Park Day School or live in the Mathilda Brown Home

Other indicators suggest that the lines of social inequality, which Joan Tronto argues structure caregiving relations, run through the material culture of this place. Of course, the lines were visible historically, but some contemporary physical manifestations are noticeably different. They indicate the transformation in the place that caregiving claims in shaping public life. At one time, the paths of well-off women, indigent children, aging lower-income women, and paid staff crossed with some frequency inside the charity's buildings and in other areas of

the property. Covered porches connected the main buildings, with the arcades winding through the middle of the ten-acre site. Imagine a well-dressed, well-coifed, wealthy, young woman, coming to volunteer at the charity, stepping onto the walkway, and greeting an orphaned girl, dressed in a plain cotton smock, her hair cut short to reduce the chance of lice infestation! Human beings, themselves, embodied difference as members of varied social classes met each other on the site. In addition, the charity's property held gendered connotations, standing as an example of a woman's place. As the Ladies' Relief Society sold off buildings and property, the ten-acre site was broken into smaller parcels, and the collective spaces of the charity were dismembered. Now, tall, chain-link fences separate buildings and divide outdoor areas that were once used for utilitarian and honorific purposes — to play, to congregate, and to grow food. Child labor was once commonplace as children looked after livestock and tended the orchards and vegetable garden.

To be sure, there is a pragmatic justification for the enclosures that secure the safety of small children and elderly women, some of whom become disoriented with age. There is also reason to celebrate the fact that needy children no longer have to work to earn their keep at a private charity. Nevertheless, the fences, which demark property lines, express the contours of class relations that continue to ripple through the charity's former setting and structure the material relationship of caregiving institutions in this historic place. The physical barriers constrain human movement and limit contact between the groups of people who use the various buildings on the site. When the Ladies' Relief Society owned the property, children walked from the Children's Home to the Babies' Nursery or to the Home for Aged Women without a second thought, according to the oral tradition. Their activities also intersected, especially as older children helped out with the younger ones (Starr 2001). Today, that is not possible because fences separate the successor buildings, the Studio One Arts Center, the Park Day School, and the Mathilda Brown Home.

Other, perhaps more troubling, indications of class relations are evident in the landscape. The striking physical disparities between buildings across the site remind us that public institutions gain different benefits from segments of the class structure. The privately owned public buildings are in far better physical shape than the publicly owned settings, having been

well maintained over the years and graced with handsome alterations and additions. Lush lawns and richly planted gardens, filled with specimen trees and shrubbery, envelop the Mathilda Brown Home and the Park Day School. The run-down state of Oakland Technical High School and the Emerson School, surrounded by cracked concrete play yards, stands in startling contrast to the friendly green spaces nearby. Moreover, even though the Mathilda Brown Home and the Park Day School are racially integrated, the public school students are mostly low income and African American. That racialized presence adds to the sense that fee-for-service establishments serve a different public than under-resourced public facilities, that class relations continue to structure this place, as they did historically.

Taking Care of "Ordinary Life at Lowly Levels" at the North Oakland Recreation Center

But is that, in fact, the case? What else can we learn from the physical condition of structures in Temescal? What does a building seem to say about the values of caregivers and the degree to which inhabitants are "cared about"? The Studio One Arts Center offers another answer because this building at once embodies the community-building aspirations of the welfare state and illustrates the effects of declining civic infrastructures on Oakland's landscape of charity. Jane Jacobs reminds us that, without places for ordinary encounters, "there is no public acquaintanceship, no foundation of public trust, no cross-connections with necessary people — and no practice or ease in applying the most ordinary techniques of public life at lowly levels" (Jacobs 1961).[25] Jacobs refers to sidewalks in this passage, but the point can be taken to include places like the Studio One Arts Center in North Oakland. This historic, two-story, masonry and wood-frame building, also known as the North Oakland Recreation Center (NORC), takes care of community needs in an ordinary way: it offers affordable arts programs to children and adults who live in and around the city. The use of the racially integrated, socially heterogeneous facility has multiplied over the years. In 1949, one hundred fifty students registered for classes in the first term; four thousand students walked through doors in 1999 (City of Oakland, Life Enrichment Agency 1999:3, 4; Drostova 1999:5)

The plain, U-shaped public building — with an "unadorned but gracious architectural style," to cite one opinion — differs from the other buildings erected by the Ladies' Relief

Society, which suggests that there is an unusual story to the place (Friends of Studio One n.d.:1). So, too, does the fact that the building and adjacent grounds are in poor physical shape, evidently in sore need of rehabilitation and renovation. Erected as a purpose-built, dormitory-style orphanage in 1894, the building was remodeled in 1906, after a fire destroyed most of it — just one week before the great San Francisco earthquake and fire. That disaster, which wiped out most of the urban fabric across the bay, caused an enormous migration to the East Bay community and hastened the rebuilding of the Oakland charity. Because the foundations and some of the first floor were intact, the Ladies' Relief Society resuscitated the dormitory-style design, although child care workers had come to prefer housing indigent children in smaller, cottage-like settings, responding to changing views of children's needs (Hart 1910). The massing and decoration of the replacement building were simplified, probably to expedite reconstruction and reduce costs, and other adjustments were made to the plan (Figure 3). Most importantly, the charity decided to move the main entry so that the front door faced 45th Street rather than other buildings on the charity's property, as had been the case previously. The decision amplified the accessibility of the structure, cementing the institution's ties to public space. It became possible to enter the courtyard building directly from a public street, after walking through an ample front yard, shaded with trees and generously set back from the sidewalk.

After World War II, residents of the North Oakland area organized to purchase the property when the charity offered the building and an adjacent playground for sale. The orphanage, which had been used to house troops during the war, was not hated or perceived to be a bastion of class privilege at the time. Although some practices were deeply resented, the women who ran the Children's Home took reasonable care of white, working-class children during the Great Depression, when few other options were available to working families of any race or creed. For the most part, the boys and girls who lived in the Children's Home were not orphans, but the sons and daughters of working men and women who could not afford to feed, dress, and house their children (Starr 2000b:A5).[26] Building on the institution's historic ties to the neighborhood, the North Oakland Area Council, a nonprofit group "composed of progressive and civic-minded men of the Temescal area," raised $22,500, enough to buy the property, according to the *Post-Enquirer* ("Who Owns $113,000 Swimming Pool? City May Lose Out on

Legal Technicality" 1949:4). The group gave the entire setting to the city in 1947, writing into the deed a specific condition of the gift — that it be used to create a "public recreation center for all age groups" (Grey 1949).[27]

That provision met the needs of Oakland's Recreation Department, which was looking for a piece of land so that it could build a new public swimming pool and pool house close to the Technical High School ("Architects Engaged to Draw Up Plans for Five Swimming Pools" 1946). A group of reformers in the department also wanted to open a community center, with a wide range of programs that incorporated the "service to neighborhoods and people orientation of the settlement house movement" (Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989). Taking the North Oakland Area Council's gift as the nucleus of the scheme, the Recreation Department built the pool complex on the boys' playground and transformed the Children's Home into a public arts and recreation center. "The entire inside of the building has been remodeled in a modern design," Jane Grey wrote in the *Oakland Tribune* when the NORC opened in September 1949. The newspaper reporter, author of "Oakland Playground Activities," a weekly column, applauded the extent and detail of the renovation. She noted the "mammoth fireplace," "excellent equipment," and "the color scheme [which] is delightfully cheery and gay" (Grey 1949).

Grey insisted that the project, conceived in the optimism of the post-World War II period, fulfilled certain sentiments of Progressive Era reformers — a period marked by "the institutionalization of moral responsibility" in California, as one historian has argued recently.[28] She cited Joseph Lee, an early U.S. advocate of the movement for organized play, to give substance to the claim of continuity of ideals. "There is no happier family than the one that plays together," Lee had maintained several decades earlier, "and no more peaceful neighborhood than one in which play areas are used to the mutual advantage of all, in the spirit of community interest" (Grey 1949). The paternalism that infuses Lee's statement was present in the making of the Temescal project, at the same time as the place recalled other, more praiseworthy aspects of the prewar reform project in Oakland. To bring to life the North Oakland Recreation Center, the Recreation Department consciously rejuvenated the pragmatic institution-building methods that reform-minded women had embraced at the beginning of the century. The department employed a similar building method, adaptive reuse; it used familiar siting strategies, as settlement houses,

schools, and playgrounds were located in close proximity to one another; and the city accepted a gift of real property, analogous to ones that had been made earlier in the century. At that time, as in the 1940s, the transfer to municipal ownership permitted a privately run philanthropy to become a bona fide public place. Planners at the Recreation Department revived another feature of the "settlement idea" by providing an apartment within the facility for the resident director and her family.[29]

Quickly, working people and their families learned that they could find a new kind of care inside the renovated building — different in form and substance from the care that had been offered previously at the Children's Home. To begin with, two directors good-humoredly managed the different components of the program, one person focusing on the arts, the other on recreation. They interpreted the mandate in an open-minded fashion, taking "service to neighborhood and community" to mean meeting local and citywide needs. The design of the orphanage eased the accommodation of those intentions. The parlor, dormitories, playrooms, and other large rooms, simply decorated and graced with tall ceilings, suited a heterogeneous program even though the building lacked adequate circulation space (dedicated hallways). The Studio One Arts Center, which began in another facility, moved into the second floor of the NORC when it opened in 1949. Four instructors offered classes in the visual arts and handicrafts to a wide audience; the reasonable price, $2.50 a semester, made the classes affordable to people who otherwise might not have been able to find the money to pay for them. The NORC also contained rooms for social events, including a dance hall and a dining room. Making large spaces available to ordinary, working people and their families was important in Oakland because they often lived in small houses that could not accommodate large groups of people. The YWCA rented an upstairs room for a branch office, other groups used the "agency room" free of charge, and food was cooked for local day camps in the orphanage's former kitchen. Game rooms for table tennis, pool, and badminton, clubrooms for boys and girls, and programs for senior citizens were also present in the place. In addition, the staff worked closely with the managers of other facilities to coordinate arts instruction at playgrounds and recreation centers across the city (Drostova 1999:5; Grey 1949; Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989).

In due course, the arts program came to take center stage in the former orphanage, and the recreation component moved elsewhere. One supervisor managed the facility, known informally as Studio One, and it attracted eminent local artists as instructors. They maintained a high level of quality in instruction at the same time as they supported the initial mandate: to bring the arts to ordinary, working people in Oakland and their families. The Recreation Department built equipment and furnishings in its wood and metal shops. "The Studio was their pet," a former director recalled (Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989). A drama program was added, at times the center provided child care, and it extended other opportunities to Oakland's citizens as well. According to Johnette Jones Morton (2001), the present director of Studio One, the facility has been racially integrated at least since the mid-1970s, when she joined the staff as a part-time instructor in the children's program. In drama productions, teachers assigned roles based on artistic merit and without regard to race. "The center was strong in being able to do that," in Morton's view. She remembers that no other facility in the area made that kind of commitment to integrating dramatic performances at the time.

The Recreation Department endorsed other democratizing goals with respect to the arts, but declining funds depleted staff and frustrated implementation. At one time, the agency envisioned establishing an arts center in every Oakland neighborhood, but only one other facility opened in the 1950s. Studio Two, aptly named, closed down in 1978, due to the budget crisis provoked by Proposition 13, and a fire later destroyed the building (Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989; Morton 2001). Still, hopes for a citywide arts program did not dissipate. Morton remembers when the directors of Oakland's recreation centers, of which Studio One is one, and public school teachers worked jointly to spread instruction in the performing and visual arts across the city. The program culminated in the production of a holiday pageant, which took place in a different high school each year, bringing together teachers, artists, children, and families from across the city. The program fell into decline after the death of the woman who supervised it for sixty years. Her position was never filled. These kinds of obstacles — the effects of Proposition 13, lack of funding, declining civic commitment, and loss of key figures — damaged the continuity of this sort of community care in California.

Clearly, remarkable foresight prompted the making of Studio One in the postwar period. Today, this public place continues to give life to a democratic vision that reform-minded men and women insisted could enrich the daily lives of working families across Oakland. Their supposition proved correct because Studio One has opened the door to the visual and performing arts for a great number of people. Morton emphasizes that the Studio One program is restorative, containing a caring function that is deeply important to the many people, including dual-earner working families, whom she counts as part of the facility's heterogeneous community. In Morton's view, arts instruction is a tool for caregiving because it enables children and adults to learn more about the value of self-expression. She insists that making a piece of art or performing in a play helps people to relax, to reduce stress; she sees the experience as a form of meditation, allowing a person to lose sight of place and time. Because the arts help people take better care of themselves, as individuals and social beings, Morton emphasizes the continued importance of the initial mission. Offering noncompetitive classes, where there is no pressure to perform or excel, allows Studio One be a place where people can freely come — to learn a craft, to hone a skill, to perform, and to meet other like-minded people who share an interest in the arts. In addition, no child is denied access to instruction at Studio One because he or she cannot afford to pay for a class (Morton 2001).

Those policies helped to make Studio One into a kind of social club for the people who have used it for years and years. To Morton, the continuity of use substantiates the claim that Studio One's great strength lies in its program, not in its ties to a historic site or place, per se. Speaking as a private citizen, she understands Studio One to be a service organization that theoretically could be located in any place in Oakland. Other people, who teach and take classes in the facility, hold a different point of view. They share the commitment to accessibility and inclusion, but maintain that the program and the place benefit each other, the neighborhood, and the city at large. A great variety of people come to Studio One on a daily basis — children, teenagers, artists, working parents, single adults — and during the course of my research, I spoke with a number of them who have come to appreciate the building's contribution to the program. Jeff Norman, an artist who lives in Temescal, first came to Studio One to learn yoga and cherished the fact that he could walk to classes from his house. Using Studio One as a neighbor,

he became curious about its unusual design. Studio One appealed to Sandy Strehlou, a community organizer, for ideological and political reasons. She wanted to take an art class and valued the noncompetitive atmosphere of Studio One and the site's historic status, especially the cultural history attached to it. A class in women's art history, taught by a local artist, brought Di Starr to Studio One. She learned about the course from an organization of women artists and commuted to Oakland once a week to take the evening class. A few years later, after moving to the city, she started to teach photography and continues to offer workshops. Starr likes to teach at Studio One because she feels "energy about the place." She argues that comes from the site's historic status, as a caregiving institution, as well as its current uses (Starr 2000a; 2001; Strehlou and Norman 2001).

These deeply held feelings about the program and its ties to architecture and history run through the heated debate that has developed about the future of the Studio One Arts Center (Figure 4). In the past decade, the physical condition of the building and the high cost of renovation have provoked a stormy dispute about the structure's historic value, revealing sharply different attitudes (Allen n.d.; Drostova 1999). In 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake severely damaged the unreinforced masonry building, which also had suffered from poor maintenance over the years. The City of Oakland declared Studio One a "URM," meaning that the building is structurally unsafe, but it remains open for public use for the time being. In the mid-1990s, the city commissioned Noll and Tam, an architectural firm, to produce a feasibility study for the renovation of the building (including retrofit to ensure safety in an earthquake and handicap accessibility), but the plan has not been realized (Noll & Tam, Architects 1995). Putting the full design into place carries a high price tag in the current market – estimates range from $6 to $10 million – and public money is scarce. Fearing the consequences of inaction and concerned about a possible move, Jeff Norman, Sandy Strehlou, and others organized the Friends of Studio One and galvanized the Oakland Studio Arts Association (OSAA), an existing advisory group, into action. Goaded by rising community pressure, a City Council Task Force considered several options in 1999: keeping Studio One at its current site and renovating the building, tearing down the old orphanage and rebuilding in the current location, or moving the facility elsewhere (City of Oakland, Life Enrichment Agency 1999). All of the options are expensive, with relocation

being the most costly, and OSAA has taken the position that the Noll and Tam plan ought be fully implemented, according to Sandy Strehlou, who is now president of the board of directors (Noll & Tam, Architects 1995; Strehlou and Norman 2001). Since the city has offered to match, dollar for dollar, money raised by the community, OSAA has taken on the task of coordinating the fund-raising effort (Strehlou 2001). The city has given the group seed money for a fund-raising feasibility study, and OSAA sees the patrons of Studio One as its greatest resource — the people who have backed the facility since it opened more than fifty years ago.

Nevertheless, $10 million is an enormous amount of money to raise, and the building could easily fall down in another earthquake or be devastated by a fire while OSAA tries to procure the community's contribution. Even if OSAA finds the money, success in preservation is not guaranteed because members of the community disagree about the symbolic meaning of the building and the place it has taken in the lives of Oakland's working families over time. The Friends of Studio One and OSAA take a pragmatic position with respect to design — a position that draws on longstanding patterns of making public buildings in American cities, including the one under study. "There is a solution to this problem," the Friends of Studio One argue, "and it is called adaptive reuse" (Friends of Studio One 1998a). The building interior needs to be upgraded and the design altered so that hallways, fire stairs, an elevator, and other features can be added. At the same time, the advocates for preservation stress the continuity of social purpose that has characterized the occupation of this place. "Except for a short period of time during World War II when the Army leased it, the building has continuously functioned to provide essential community services to the citizens of Oakland" (Friends of Studio One 1998b). Although that statement may be true, the tenor can irk others who recall the setting's segregated past. Johnette Morton, for example, insists that the shortcomings of a place must be remembered when it comes to creating historical monuments. In the case of Studio One, Morton, who is African American, wonders why it should be preserved when the doors were once closed to black children. In her personal view, programs are important, not places. Architecture needs to change as societies are transformed (Morton 2001).

Morton raises a compelling point, but the social construction of Studio One has changed dramatically since the building was used as an orphanage. At other historic sites, for instance,

former plantations, preservationists take a setting's racially charged past to be an opportunity for education and debate about the changing contours of inequality in the United States (Klein 2000; Thompson 2000). With respect to Studio One, the building stands as a tribute to the men and women who envisioned a new program for it after World War II, who organized to buy the property and give it to the city, making it a genuinely public place, and who subsequently worked to keep Studio One alive, under very difficult circumstances. Johnette Morton is one of them. Certainly, a case can be made that Studio One has overcome the taint of segregation and in fact now represents the power of progressive, caring politics, in no small measure because its programs so clearly furthered the cause of integration. The place itself advertises the success of democratic thinking, with respect to making the arts more available to Oaklanders in general and to people of color specifically: Studio One took the lead in integrating drama productions in the San Francisco Bay Area. The very presence of the building shows that state-subsidized construction could work to deconstruct the color line in American cities during the postwar era, rather than only reinforce it (Sugrue 1996).

The fact that public funds have not been available to maintain properly the building and adjacent grounds is cause for sober reflection. We lament the sorry state of public life in contemporary American society and assign cause to a variety of forces, many of which seem beyond the control of ordinary human beings (Bellah 2000; Bellah, Marsden, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1996; Putnam 2000). Nevertheless, the current condition of Studio One points out that we, as urban citizens, can acknowledge and take responsibility for nurturing "ordinary public life at lowly levels," to recall Jane Jacobs's telling phrase. That was the case in the post-war era, when private citizens worked with public servants to sustain and expand — to take care of — urban public culture in a growing city. I do not mean to suggest that the need to take care of everyday public places no longer figures in contemporary civic discourse. To the contrary, the building's poor condition indicates that ties between architecture, power, and culture remain vitally important in constructing urban politics. Maintaining the arts program in one place keeps the Studio One program in the public eye, according to Sandy Strehlou. During the course of conversation, she insisted that the program needs the place to survive. The claim, which implies that urban space creates political power, resounds with the reasoning of Michel Foucault, albeit

somewhat ironically. Foucault made us aware of the power embedded in the institutional gaze. Strehlou emphasizes that Studio One's visibility — its location in a recognizable building, a former charitable institution — keeps the need for funding the arts in the foreground of city politics and thus present in the minds of local politicians (Strehlou and Norman 2001). It would be much easier to cut program funds, for instance, if the building were to be shut down and the components spread across town. In this case, we can see a positive value can come from being "gazed at."

Finally, the plainness of the architecture and the sorry physical state of the building and the adjacent grounds should not blind us to the rich cultural memories that are embedded in this site. Studio One is a survivor of a once vital network of institutions that wealthy women built to take care of people less fortunate than themselves. However flawed certain aspects of their social thinking, the building documents their approach to caregiving, and its existence, as a physical object, makes it possible to appreciate the ties of architecture and caregiving, ties that reverberate across time. When the Studio One made plans to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 1999, Di Starr proposed writing a "prehistory" of the orphanage. That became possible for her when three elderly women walked into the social hall (formerly the parlor), where Starr's class was in session. The Cooley sisters had come to visit for the first time since living in the Children's Home during late 1920s and early 1930s. Their parents, who were divorced, could not afford to take care of their children and so brought the daughters to the Children's Home. There, they remembered receiving excellent care, at once loving and strict, in a setting that was divided by gender and class, as well as by race and age. The sisters quickly learned that girls lived in one wing of the U-shaped building, boys in the other, and their paths crossed on a daily basis only in the dining room because the playgrounds were also divided by sex. Moreover, the Ladies' Relief Society reserved the parlor and front stairs for the association's own use; resident children came to those spaces infrequently, either on holidays or when families came to visit. Inspired by the account, Starr went on to research further the history of the orphanage, using the Ladies' Relief Society archives at the Mathilda Brown Home, and published in a local newspaper a moving story about the sisters and their lives in the Children's Home. She reported that the Cooley sisters

remember the matron as a loving, nurturing woman and recall that well-behaved, respectful children were grateful to have a place to stay at a time of need (Starr 2000b).

That story takes us to the heart of my argument that caregiving is a physical matter, as well as a social need. Imagine if the building had not been there when the Cooley sisters arrived, either as children or as adults. At the very least, Studio One makes it possible to learn about the common need for care and continuities and changes in forms and extent of provisioning for human needs. The place reveals stories about the need for care, stories that otherwise would not be known.

What's Usable About the Past?

At the Center for Working Families, we speak forcefully about the disappearance of the network of institutions and services that once supported the needs of working families. In the main, we agree that we live among the shards of that network and that its disintegration leaves working families on their own to find child care, assisted living centers for elderly parents, and so forth. Rightfully, we acknowledge the political, economic, and social dimensions of this civic decline, examining ties to capitalism, globalization, privatization, the rise of markets, and a host of other structural factors. Following the reasoning of feminist political philosophers, we turn to care as a solution, taking care to be a basis for making radical political judgments, to borrow Joan Tronto's phrase. We also need to give attention to the sites where care takes place and related forms of social relations and organizations, so that we are able to re-create civic structures and rebuild communities in a caring fashion, meeting the needs of working families and other people in a humane and democratic manner.

In this paper, I have argued that thinking physically and historically about care takes us into the broader cultural dimensions of caregiving, by stressing its collective, contextual, material, and sited dimensions. "Providing context helps us to widen the lens through which we understand what is happening to us," to paraphrase a comment that Alice Trillin (2001:42) recently made about her own illness. Using the Ladies' Relief Society as a case study, I have shown that reform-minded women took the lead in erecting charitable landscapes in American cities, insisting that the private needs of working families be a matter of public concern.

Claiming their rightful place in urban public culture, women created a physical context for caregiving larger than that of the individual family and through initiatives outside of the state and religious institutions publicized the fact that working women were not able to assume all of the caring needs within the household. Importantly, the female institution builders did not conceive of a city as a *tabula rasa,* as a blank slate to develop or a place to wipe clean to ready it for profit-driven development. Instead, women conceptualized urban improvement in another, more artful manner, incrementally altering ordinary buildings, erecting new ones as required, and otherwise redeveloping urban sites to meet demands for care.

Their insights remain useful for making political judgments in our own time, and here I draw on the reasoning of Dolores Hayden, who has documented the rich contributions of material feminism to American political culture (Hayden 1981; see also Hayden 1997). To be sure, the needs of working families in the United States have changed since the beginning of the twentieth century; we live in a very different world than working people and their families inhabited one hundred years ago. Working families were then principally working-class families where one earner predominated. Moreover, the class-privileged women who built the landscape of charity endorsed old-fashioned ideas about charity's ties to discipline and order, and they accepted gender and race discrimination as a matter of course. Still, learning to read the landscape and its history adds crucial dimensions to our understanding of contemporary caregiving needs.

"As a community, we Americans have always had an infirm sense of history," Lewis Mumford wrote in 1925. "It has taken us a long time to assimilate the notion by which every real culture lives and flourishes — that the past is a reservoir from which we can replenish our own emptiness," he commented, "that so far from being the ever-vanishing moment, it is the abiding heritage in a community's life" (Mumford 1925:19). I take these dimensions of the past to be important to our scholarly purposes here and to the formation of public policy. These points hold special relevance to women, who continue to be the principal givers of care.

- Settings like the piece of property once owned by the Ladies' Relief Society publicize the fact that at least some of the needs of working families ought to and can be met in a public, collective manner, outside the home, and not only through

the "lifeline" approach that I discussed at the opening of this paper, that is, conceptualizing care in terms of legal rights and the law. Implicitly, that latter method resembles a one-to-one private conversation, to borrow Arlie Hochschild's phrase; it remains prevalent in shaping contemporary social policy, that is, in what remains of the welfare state, and it shapes the understanding of caregiving (also as a one-to-one relationship). By broadening the terms, by thinking of human interdependence, needs, and entitlements to care in physical and spatial terms, we are able to highlight the cultural and political dimensions of caring, thus accenting our shared responsibility for caregiving.

- By recognizing the historic antecedents to our shared responsibilities, we are able to expand our understanding of the constitution of the public, its ties to spaces for the social, the complexities of meaning associated with those concepts in a society where public buildings may be run by the state, religious groups, voluntary organizations, and for-profit companies. That enables us to scrutinize the possibilities (and dangers) associated with partnerships between public and private organizations, which is useful at a point in time when the government has retreated from the provision of social welfare, even though working families need more and more access to care.
- In addition, the historic achievements of institution builders bring to the fore the importance of physical places in the social construction of caregiving. The architectural character of a place and its geographic location were most important to the makers *and* the users of charitable landscapes historically, and they remain so today in Oakland, as any number of people have told me. They take the historic status of community structures to be as significant as the social purposes the structures serve.
- Finally, thinking historically and physically helps guard against romanticism when we think about care and its ties to community building. Care, as Joan Tronto insists, is given across lines of inequality. Scrutinizing the changing physical states of charitable landscapes teaches us valuable lessons about the relative

> power of social groups with respect to caregiving and various ways by which needs are met and makes us aware that inequalities ought to and can be mitigated. Charitable landscapes are themselves threaded with the material consequences of social inequality: they reveal the changing contours of class, gender, and race relations, and they themselves need care, as they are affected over time by neglect, state authority, and the rise of markets.

As we press for greater attention to the needs of working families, we need to recognize that we have powerful physical tools at our disposal. Construing care as a public, physical problem has a logical corollary, institution building, as I have shown in the preceding pages. Some contemporary organizations have taken this point to heart, acknowledging that humanitarian social policy, alone, is not enough to take care of the needs of working families. A few months ago, the Ford Motor Company and the United Auto Workers announced that giant auto maker is going to open more than thirty community-based “Family Service and Learning Centers” nationwide. In these centers, the company expects to meet the needs of its employees and their families for many kinds of care (Ford Motor Company and the United Auto Workers 2000; Greenhouse 2000). As these centers develop, we will see the degree to which thinking physically about care can become a basis for refiguring national politics. With luck, that will happen. But even if that fails to occur, these sites may contribute to social change in other ways — becoming places that nurture public life at lowly levels and thus help to create a new common ground in our cities, one that appears because we all need care.

Illustrations

Figure 1. The Beckwith House, 1886. This building served as a home for elderly, lower-income women and indigent, working-class children from 1873 to 1882, when the Ladies' Relief Society opened a separate, purpose-built "Home for Aged Women." A close look shows the matron standing in the doorway and children gathered on the front steps and around the house. Use courtesy of the Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.

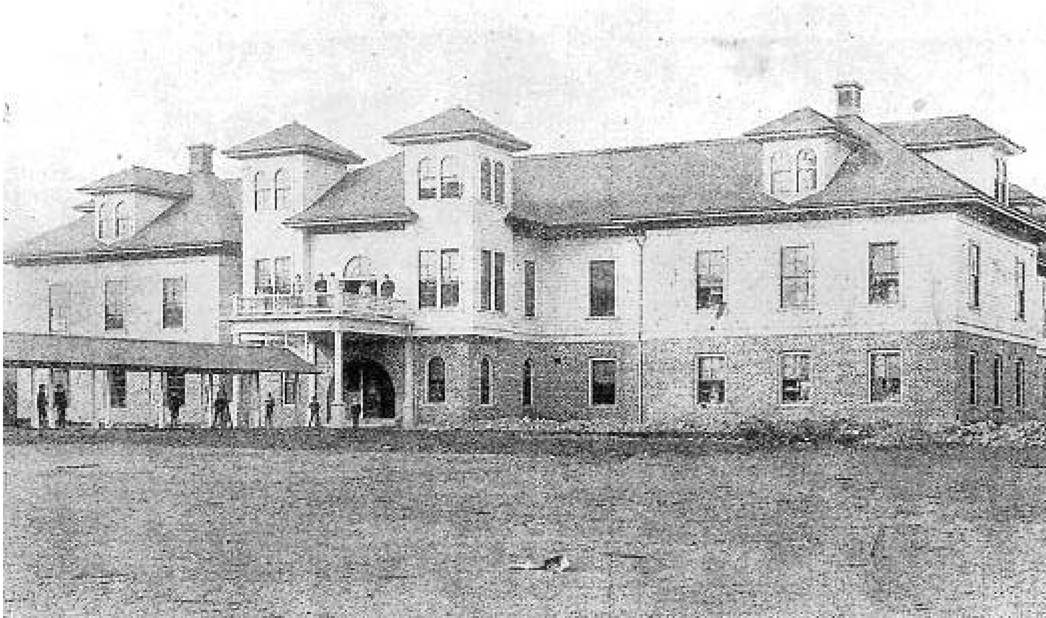

Figure 2. The Children's Home, 1898. A covered walkway connected the orphanage with the Home for Aged Women and the DeFremery Nursery. The porch shaded children on sunny days and protected them from the heavy winter rains that fall in this part of California. Use courtesy of the Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.

Figure 3. The Children's Home, c. 1925. The main entry of the Children's Home faced 45th Street after it was rebuilt in 1906. The "new" Babies' Home, completed in 1925, is next to the Home for Aged Women, erected in the early 1880s. Use courtesy of The Oakland Museum of California.

Figure 4. Studio One Arts Center, 1990s. This picture shows the courtyard of the former orphanage and the building's clear relationship to 45th Street. The orphanage was turned into a public arts and recreation center in 1949. Use courtesy of the Friends of Studio One.

Notes

*The opening quote appears in Mumford (1925:19) and is cited by Blake (1990:296-297), from whom I have borrowed the phrase "usable past." I am grateful to Barrie Thorne, Ning de Connick-Smith, and my other colleagues at the Center for Working Families for valuable comments and criticism. I am indebted to Betty Marvin, who opened the ample files of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Bill Sturm and Kathleen DiGiovanni at the Oakland History Room, Chris Noll, of Noll and Tam, Architects, and people in the community who shared thoughts about the Studio One Arts Center — Johnette Jones Morton, center director, Sandy Strehlou, president of the Oakland Studio Arts Association, Di Starr, Jeff Norman, and Betsy Yost. Thanks, too, to Gene Sparling, who offered care and comments along the way.

1. The Pittsburgh Survey researchers were principally social workers and social reformers, not necessarily social scientists (Bulmer 1996; Greenwald and Anderson 1996:7, 10-13).

2. For excellent analyses of reform opposition to child labor and boarding and rooming, see Zelizer (1985) and Groth (1994), respectively.

3. I am relying on the definitions of caregiving as labor and relationship given by Tronto (1993) and Ruddick (1998).

4. In terms of policy, reformers debated the effectiveness of regulating the workplace, particularly with respect to establishing special terms and conditions of work for women and children, increasing wages for men so that families could be supported (the so-called "family wage"), and offering pensions (subsidies) to worthy mothers, particularly widows (Kleinberg 1996; Leiby 1978).

5. Leiby (1978) offers a conventional account of this process, useful, although the contributions of women are minimized. Skocpol (1992) and Gordon (1990) place women's activism (and women's needs) at the center of the story, although they interpret differently the consequences for welfare state social policies.

6. Jeff Weintraub (1997) offers a useful review of definitions of public and private spheres; also see Hansen (1997).

7. See sources cited above (note 3), Muncy (1991), Sklar (1995), Koven and Michel (1993), and a host of other works. Ryan (1990) offers astute analysis of women's participation in the construction of public life in nineteenth-century American cities.

8. Estelle Friedman, from whom I have borrowed the term "institution builders," focuses on the social and political aspects of the process, rather than on the physical aspects (Freedman 1979:512-515).

9. My understanding of a charitable landscape draws on Dell Upton's explanation of cultural landscapes (1992:52-53; 1994:62-63). See also Hayden (1997).

10. For similar work in the greater Boston area, see Spencer-Wood (1987:14, 16, 19; 1996:425-435).

11. For the importance of the audience in the creation of a place, see Upton (1991:196-198) and Littmann (2000:165).

12. See Clark (1939) and Jones (1936) for the overlap between public and private building in Oakland. The Works Progress Administration commissioned both surveys in the late 1930s.

13. I am thinking here of the interests of the Chicago School, as vividly expressed in the early volumes of the *American Journal of Sociology*. For an excellent analysis of the ties of Chicago School reformers to architecture and building, see Wright (1980:113, 122-123, 128).

14. I do not mean to infer that women exclusively used adaptive reuse and incremental building (and thereby were "gendered" female as building methods). Rather, I am suggesting that we come to understand the importance of these methods in urban building overall by looking at the manner in which women made public architecture, at what women did. For similar arguments, see Gilligan (1982); for discussion of this building method in other contexts, see Van Slyck (1995:129-130) and Adams (1999).

15. Zelizer (2000c) used this phrase at a colloquium at the Center for Working Families and makes the points more generally (Zelizer 2000a; 2000b).

16. I have found several discussions of the "civilizing" effects of women's public work in Oakland (Baker 1914:247-262; Beard 1915; "Work of Women in Oakland" 1897:15).

17. The best overview of California's early charities is found in Cahn and Bary (1936).

18. To begin with, the society refused state subsidies, although it could not afford to do so for long because grants from the state helped offset operating costs.

19. These points are explored in more depth in Gutman (2000).

20. Michel's points are well taken, but the term "maternal invention" is too gender specific. In Oakland, fathers, too, turned to orphanages for help.

21. Barrie Thorne (1993) makes similar points, drawing on a different context.

22. According to the society's minutes and record books, children of color were admitted on occasion, even after the charity officially endorsed racial exclusion.

23. I am very grateful to Barrie Thorne for helping me to articulate these ideas and questions and for bringing the Gordon article to my attention.

24. The siting of the two public schools was taken expressly to encourage urban development in this part of the city as Oakland (and Berkeley) spread toward Temescal during the first decades of the last century (Allen 1997:C8).

25 This particular passage is cited by Gladwell (2000:60).

26. For comparison, see Gutman (2000:147-148), Michel (1999), Cmiel (1995), Zmora (1994), and Hacsi (1997).

27. A plaque with the names of all contributors remains in the entrance hall.

28. Maschino (2001) uses this phrase to describe one phase of educational reform in California.

29. Two settlement houses in West Oakland, which became public community centers in the 1920s, served as explicit models for the postwar project in Temescal (Gutman 1999; Hatcher and Pulcifer 1989). By 1920, city and county authorities had refused to honor the Ladies' Relief Society's petitions for increased public subsidy; definitions of "public" had changed and "charity" started to lose cachet as a practice (Weston 1920:12-13).

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