The committed worker:
Class, gender and the value of childcare work

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Thesis abstract

This thesis examines how childcare work is impacted by patterns of value associated with social class and gender. The research contributes knowledge about the lived experiences of workers, and their perceptions of the status and meaning of childcare work. It draws upon a feminist Bourdieusian theoretical framework to show how gendered and classed inequalities reinforce each other within the childcare field in Australia.

Data for this study are semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty-three female workers across six metropolitan childcare centres, and one focus-group discussion. I analyse what the views of this particular cohort of workers reveal about a distinctive form of women's work, building on insights from feminist research on carework, reproductive labour and mothering, as well as cultural approaches to class analysis. I situate this analysis within the current political focus on childcare in Australia, and the high expectations for the field in remedying various forms of disadvantage. The thesis is informed by research on childcare within other minority-world nations, while acknowledging the specific classed and gendered cultures that inform the views of these Australian workers.

The central findings of the research are that childcare is significantly devalued, materially and culturally, and that workers contest this lack of value in ways that currently go unrecognised. I find that committed workers within the field invest in a form of expertise that differs from current dominant-class expectations of childcare work, and suggest that this expertise functions as a form of capital within Australian childcare settings. This expertise reflects practical wisdom developed as a result of the constraints imposed by classed and gendered inequalities. I argue that the skills of the committed worker yield little symbolic capital beyond the field, and so offer use-value for workers rather than exchange-value.

I demonstrate that the key to the expertise of the committed worker is investment in emotional capital, and its contribution to pedagogical insight, stress-management and relational awareness. The result is a worker who understands the complex and ethical nature of childcare work and its value to society. This research vitally extends knowledge about the childcare field and the contribution made by workers to the various benefits that quality childcare brings to society; reducing class-based inequality, supporting families and facilitating women's workforce participation. These findings challenge accepted wisdom about the value of childcare work, showing its emotional and relational complexity, and the ethical stance that is at the heart of the work. I conclude that the identified value of the work to society, the existing exploitation of the workforce, and the stresses on the childcare system provide good arguments for better economic and cultural recognition of this important work.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of diploma in any university or other institution and to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Yarrow Andrew

Copyright Notices

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Although located in the discipline of education, my work sits most comfortably within sociology, and the community of sociologists who attend the Australasian sociology conference (TASA) each year has become an important part of my intellectual community. Many have become friends, mentors, readers, and perhaps future collaborators in a variety of projects. Amongst the most significant have been Dr Kristin Nathalier, Maria Chan, Dr Christina Malatsky, Luke Gahan, Helen Walton, Helen Fitt, and Dr Meg Carter.

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The committed worker: Class, gender and the value of childcare work

Chapter 1: Introduction – The childcare field

Introduction

Taking as its subject childcare services in a large Australian city in the early twenty-first century, this study explores the dilemma of childcare work, seeking to understand how a field of work with such apparently low value, both economically and culturally, can simultaneously be viewed as a key element in the revitalisation of the financial and social outcomes of society. On one hand, childcare is increasingly seen as a vital aspect of early education, along with kindergarten and other forms of prior-to-school childcare provision. On the other hand the status of childcare work remains low, and those who do this work are usually assumed to be women without the ability or skills to find 'better' jobs.

The research questions that delineate this thesis are;

How is childcare work shaped by patterns of value associated with social class and gender?

- *How do workers experience the lack of value and respect for childcare work?*
- *How do workers build regimes of value and respect in their job beyond the conventional devaluing of the field?*
- *How does the nature of the work, as relational and familial, affect workers' experience of value?*
- *How are existing discursive constructions of childcare value, such as professionalism or mother-like care, taken up by workers?*

As these questions show, I came into this research with an assumption about the low value of childcare work within society, based on my own experiences as a long-time childcare practitioner. This low value is widely acknowledged within the literature, being indicated by low wages (e.g., Bretherton, 2010; England, Budig, & Folbre, 2002; Masterman-Smith, May, & Pocock, 2006) and lack of respect (Langford, 2010; Osgood, 2012; Skeggs, 1997). On the basis of the literature and personal experience I assumed that gender and social class might be significant in this devaluation. In general, the research that I undertook confirmed this assumption. What I did not expect to find was the distinctive ways workers responded to this lack of value. As I talked with the research participants, and heard their experiences of childcare work, their commitment and ethical investment in this work became apparent. Despite the low valuation of their work that was made obvious through the dismissive attitudes of others or the size of their pay packets, they refused to accept this judgement of their worth, and continued to invest in their own skills and capacities as workers. This thesis therefore tells two broad stories, one about the low value accorded to childcare work across Australian society, and another about the meaningful responses made by workers within the sector to this low value.

In the next section I outline the relevance and timeliness of this study. I then look more closely at the field of study – long day care work in Australia- and in doing so I draw attention to the silences in existing research within the field, and make clear the scope and aims of this project. I then explain the theoretical grounding of this research project and lay out the original claims to knowledge made in this thesis. I finish by outlining the structure of the thesis, and how each chapter advances the arguments I am making in this research.

Relevance and timeliness of the study

Almost thirty years ago, Waerness declared, 'it seems necessary to study not only the exploitative nature of women's traditional caregiving work, but also the positive qualities inherent in it as well as why they seem to get lost when professionalized and socialized' (1984, pp. 187-188). In regard to childcare in Australia such studies are hard to find, and this research takes up Waerness' call to understand the positive qualities of this poorly-valued work (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). There is a tension between the historical understanding of childcare work as feminised carework, and newer ideas about human capital formation and educational competitiveness, which appears to have pulled the field towards a professionalism model.

In uncertain economic times, and amid concern over global competitiveness, many governments see investment in human capital – in education – as one of the few investments that is guaranteed to yield advantage in the long term. With great pressure to create positive economic growth in an increasingly constrained (both financially and environmentally) global environment, childcare is seen as having a vital role in releasing well-educated women from caring duties into productive roles within wider society (Jenson, 2008). The recent Federal Australian Labor government, in power from 2007 to 2013, was a very active policy maker in education, beginning in 2008 with a number of ground-breaking agreements across all states and territories, which have historically had separate structures, funding and policy (Council of Australian Governments, 2008; Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). These agreements have made it possible to enact historically-significant legislation for the early childhood field, legislating around curriculum (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), minimum standards (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011) and workforce strategy (Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012). One of the outcomes of this high-level policy-making for this study has been the funding of some important research in the field, particularly around workforce issues within childcare and across the broader early childhood sector (Australian Federal Government, 2010; Bretherton, 2010; Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010; Federal Government, 2011; Federal Productivity Commission, 2011). The recent change of government has called some of these reforms into questions, with the Productivity Commission (an independent government body) being asked to undertake a broad-ranging

investigation of childcare (Federal Productivity Commission, 2013). The terms of reference address many of the issues raised in this thesis, such as the role of childcare, its importance to the workforce, its workplace relations, and its accessibility to parents.

This study also acknowledges Warmington's (2009) arguments about the limited ways that issues of inequality are taken up within education. Too often studies of education imagine a historically abstract figure of the teacher that 'replace[s] actual raced, gendered, classed subjects of political practice' (Warmington, 2009, p. 290). This thesis brings these embodied politically-charged subjects (childcare workers) into view, in order to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about the childcare field.

The field of study

This study takes as its focus the phenomenon of long day care, where care is provided, sometimes for as long as twelve hours a day, for babies and older children before their move to formal schooling. Given the age of those attending long day care, this invariably involves a high level of physical and emotional care, as these are children only beginning to learn independence from others. Although long day care (or *childcare*, as it is more commonly called in Australia) has always involved many educational aspects, the focus on education has intensified in recent years.

Child care has become a significant industry[1] in Australia, providing care for approximately 870 000 children over 13 638 services, with each child attending for an average of 26 hours a week (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). This figure encompasses a variety of forms of child care, including out-of-school-hours care (OSHC), family day care (FDC) and vacation care. Long day care (LDC), the subject of this study, remains by far the biggest provider of services, accounting for 61% of children attending the various forms of childcare.

This study focuses on the lives of workers in long day care, exploring their experiences and opinions. It draws upon data from individual interviews with twenty-three staff working across six services located in economically-diverse neighbourhoods, and one focus group interview session. I analyse what is important to interviewees in their working lives, and how their practices are shaped by the material and discursive constraints of the field[2], guided by the research questions outlined above. I utilise a variety of research in this process, including analyses of social class, feminist research on carework and reproductive labour, and work within the sociology of emotions.

Silences in existing childcare research

This thesis has aimed to bring to light some issues that are well-understood by childcare workers, but that seem to get lost in the government's focus on economic or policy research. As Fraser (1989) has observed, there are at least four competing ideas of what childcare should be achieving, all with different groups that advocate for them. The result is many

competing demands for government action, some with conflicting aims. The first sees childcare as a way to alleviate the deficits of 'lower class' children and is often promoted by governments wanting to look like they can 'fix' education (Gillies, 2005). The second views childcare as a way to help welfare recipients get out to work - either directly, by employing them in childcare (Osgood, 2005), or by looking after their children as they work or study – and is popular among those taxpayers who feel they are paying more than their share of society's costs. The third, popular with business leaders, understands childcare as helping the competitiveness of the workforce, by drawing privileged and educated women into paidwork (Prentice, 2009). Lastly there are the feminist arguments about childcare's ability to reshape gendered relations, through collectivising the work of mothering, and providing respectable, valued work for some women (Randall, 2000). This array of competing agendas often makes it difficult to identify what most matters within the childcare field, and the voices of workers often go unheard, particularly in comparison to the clamour made by business leaders, governments, or wealthy taxpayers.

Misrecognising the social importance of childcare

Amid these competing voices, I argue that the value of the work, and the workers who do it, constitute 'the elephant in the room' within long day childcare – easy to recognise, yet challenging to talk about. Yet little will change in the childcare field without a fundamental revaluation (and re-evaluation) of this work. Sayer's (2011b) argument about sociology and its lack of a concept of human flourishing suggests why the problem of unvalued childcare work goes unresolved. If the supply of female low-paid labour for childcare does not become too scarce, or the turnover within the field too high, then there is no problem with childcare in conventional economic or bureaucratic terms.

However the recognition that people need to feel valued and respected to be able to flourish must necessarily change this political calculus. For childcare workers their ability to do the job at the highest level requires support and acknowledgement (of both their needs and their opinions), and an understanding that their wellbeing impacts on all aspects of the field and its outcomes. A recent extensive review of the childcare workforce concludes that the field continues to function only through the dedication of a minority of workers (Bretherton, 2010). My research explores the lived experiences of these workers, and the ways that they suffer or flourish as a result of the conditions of the field. Listening to these committed workers talking about their habitual exhaustion, and their doubts about how long they can continue, makes it apparent that the field cannot continue in this way. Research must address the needs and views of workers – of childcare as it is lived and worked – in order to reveal what will help institutional childcare to thrive in an increasingly uncertain future.

My point about this issue being well-known but unacknowledged is illustrated in a government report prepared by Watson (2006) in regard to early childhood education and training. The author notes that the acquisition of early childhood qualifications is assumed to

be a pathway into the early childhood field, improving the overall availability and quality of the workforce. Instead many workers see these qualifications as pathways out of the field, with qualified staff leaving for jobs which gain them 'more respect (from society), higher pay and better working conditions' (2006, p. 48). This 'brain drain' continues to undermine efforts to improve the conditions and respect experienced by workers, because those who might potentially be its most effective advocates are the most likely to leave for more valued work.

Those who go into this work are also well aware of the problem, though this receives only limited acknowledgement at a policy level. For example a recent study of pre-service childcare educators in Australia quoted one as saying;

> *It's all about money. You go to uni for four years, come out with a $16,000 debt to go to work for $29,000 a year. I can earn more pulling beers at my local pub. I loved prac and could really see myself in child care but then reality hits* (Childcare student, quoted in; Thorpe, Ailwood, Brownlee, & Boyd, 2011, p. 92)

The authors talk about the altruism of childcare workers in their conclusion, and about their desire to 'make a difference' (2011, p. 93), but stop short of calling for an examination of childcare pay and conditions of work. Nor do they link these economic factors to a societal devaluation of carework or work done by women more generally. Their optimism about the fact that some women are still prepared to consider childcare work fails to address the real exploitation and suffering of most childcare workers as a result of pervasive maldistribution and misrecognition.

Positioning this study within existing research

Childcare is already widely studied, with the focus on three domains; the psychological, economic and educational impacts of this practice. These three areas of research represent three disciplines that have predominantly shaped the early childhood landscape. From a sociological perspective, however, the work of early childhood workers has received little attention. Childcare as a field remains a 'black box', being viewed simplistically as having particular inputs (infrastructure, funding, staffing, children), and particular outputs (freed-up female workers, school-ready children, happy families, balanced budgets). This black box approach tends to ignore how childcare functions in the everyday, for workers and children, and how what goes on in childcare services impacts on the other issues noted above.

Psychological research

Given the privileged status of mother-care, institutional childcare is often at risk of being seen as a poor alternative, and there are frequent debates about the psychological impact of such care on children (e.g., Burman, 1994; Margetts, 2002; Urwin, 1985). Psychological research tends to construct the child as innocent, constructing her as unaware of the power relations she is embedded within (Osgood, 2012). I argue that most research around childcare assumes a similar lack of awareness in childcare workers themselves, although work by

feminist psychologists has proved useful in challenging this silence (e.g., Burman, 1994; Walkerdine, 1986).

Economic research

The financial importance of childcare is increasingly in the spotlight, with much research being done into the quality of childcare, with a particular focus on what makes for 'high' quality childcare (Hatch, 2007; Helburn & Howes, 1996; Rush, 2006). Such research, which identifies distinct economic and social benefits from high quality care, has driven an ever-increasing audit culture within childcare over the last twenty years (Ishimine, 2011; Lyons, 2012; Sumsion, 2006), in order to quantify these benefits effectively. Economic research also recognises the potential to free up the nation's female workforce to engage in 'productive' (i.e., paid) work, rather than spending time as unpaid caregivers (Brennan, Blaxland, & Tannous, 2009). This drives research that examines whether there is enough childcare, and whether it is located where it is most useful (e.g., Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010).

Educational research

Childcare is also examined educationally, with considerable research on how early childhood teaching and teacher education should be carried out, in terms of curriculum, behaviour management and so on (Rivalland, 2008; Thorpe, Millear, & Petriwskyj, 2012). While educational issues are important, the focus is often very narrow, on particular educational interventions rather than a 'big picture' approach to childcare work (e.g., Berris & Miller, 2011). Even so, childcare continues to be under-valued as education. A global report on early childhood education suggested that, '[e]xperts from around the world highlight the importance of a high-quality system in ensuring good overall outcomes from preschool education, not least *to distinguish it from simple childcare*' (J. Watson, 2012, p. 7; emphasis added). This dismissal of childcare's educational role is surprising when the same report talks about the benefits of longer hours of preschool education for disadvantaged students, which childcare already delivers. This study contests such persistent devaluation of the role of childcare, and thus the expertise of those who work within it.

Feminists have advocated for teacher's work to be better valued almost since the beginnings of compulsory education (Skelton & Francis, 2009). However there has been more ambivalence about childcare work, seemingly because of the classed dynamics regarding who uses childcare and who works within it (Randall, 2000). The silence around class issues in childcare – what Lawler calls 'middle-class politics' (2005, p. 803) - means that dominant-class views of childcare have tended to remain unchallenged by the views of those who perform the work, despite their fundamental role within the field.

Towards a sociology of the early childhood field

I position my research within the sociology of education, and the under-researched area of early childhood education, specifically long day childcare. Although the sociology of education is a thriving sub-discipline, exploring how issues such as social class and gender shape schooling, early childhood research has been dominated historically by child development perspectives, with little attention being paid to how children, families and workers are positioned within societal power relationships. A sociology of early childhood is needed because early childhood services, particularly in minority-world countries such as Australia or the UK, have a distinctive history and culture quite different from the government-controlled school sector.

Aims and structure of the thesis

The main aim of this thesis is to show how workers respond to the devaluing of the practices and customs of childcare, and how this can be understood sociologically. My central argument, built upon in successive chapters, is that childcare workers have developed a form of subcultural capital (I describe it as 'the committed worker') that constitutes a form of resistance to the lack of value attributed to childcare work within society. This subcultural capital represents a particular set of practices that significantly exceeds the basic requirements of the job. Within the limited boundaries of the childcare field this subcultural capital can at times generate symbolic capital, though not economic capital. Nonetheless it provides a necessary sense of self-respect for workers that can counterbalance the more usual assumptions about their role.

Methodology and ethics

Methodologically, I chose to use qualitative methods, because my aim was to explore how and why workers behave and feel as they do within their work. Quantitative work has provided some useful background to this research, highlighting the contrast between the systemic wage deficit that attaches to care work (e.g., England, et al., 2002), which reveals its low value within the field of power, and the surprising finding regarding childcare staff's satisfaction with their work (Australian Federal Government, 2010). Given the lack of research into the lives of workers, this thesis could be considered an exploratory study (Yin, 1994), and qualitative methods are more likely to suggest a variety of directions for future research about the childcare field in Australia.

Although ethnographic work, including participant observation, was my first preference as a research method, constraints on access to childcare services have made this more difficult, in terms of the scope of permissions needed from all participants, even those not being directly researched (i.e., children). As a result, data was obtained primarily from interviews, with one follow-up focus group, to which all interview participants were invited. In retrospect, such a method delivered more useful information, because the data from interviews

represents more accurately the perceptions of the participants themselves, with less distortion from my pre-conceived notions of childcare practice based on my prior work experiences (Smith, 2005). Aside from the conceptual language of Bourdieu that will be deployed in the thesis (discussed in chapter 3) there are some additional terms used in the thesis that may require additional explanation. This clarification can be found in Appendix II, which includes a glossary of terms and some extended discussion of some particular language issues.

Theoretical framework of the study

My theoretical framework has its foundation in Bourdieu's work (e.g., 1984, 1986, 1990a), drawing particularly on his notions of capital and field. These expand the notion of social class beyond static notions of 'social location', to a more dynamic understanding of classed relations, and the ways these power-relations can shift as individuals move across contexts, and over time. I have particularly relied on feminist scholars who have taken up Bourdieu's work and demonstrate how this can be used to understand the lived experiences of women, in carework (e.g., Skeggs, 1997, 2004a), as parents (e.g., Reay, 1998; Reay, 2005) and as embodied subjects within a gender-unequal world (e.g., McNay, 2004). These scholars, sometimes called 'cultural theorists' (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 51) do not focus solely on social class, but take an intersectional approach that seeks to analyse class alongside gender, race and other aspects of inequality. These scholars explicitly address 'the ways in which individuals make sense of their social and economic positions in relation to others' (Gillies, 2007, p. 34). My research builds on these insights, unpacking how childcare workers make sense of their labour, both intellectually and emotionally[3], in relation to the prior historical schemes of value that early childhood work is positioned within (Skeggs, 2004a). The analytical categories of Bourdieu, and the ways these have been mobilised by feminist researchers, are helpful in showing how workers engage in the struggles of the social field (Sayer, 2005) around the worth of childcare work, and respond to the judgements made about them by others.

In looking more explicitly at gendered relations, I have used feminist theories of reproductive labour – labour that happens outside the economic field – to show how childcare is influenced significantly by these concepts, despite its apparent status as paid-work. Delphy and Leonard (1992) produced an early and influential account of women's exploitation in the home, drawing on a materialist feminist framework, and this has given shape to much of my own understanding of gendered exploitation. Hays (1996) has shown how women's exploitation is being reworked ideologically in new ways, in response to the gains made by 'second-wave' feminist activism. She maps out the rising and difficult-to-fulfil expectations of intensive mothering, and how these ideologies continue to coerce women into an unequal share of familial work. She also notes the classed aspects of this phenomenon, as it is women with greater holdings of cultural and economic capital who are more able to fulfil

these expectations of mothering. Bubeck (1995) provides a useful perspective on this process, showing how it is through the mechanism of carework, or more specifically, the sense of obligation to care, that reproductive power relations are enforced.

The initial finding from the pilot study, that staff understood their work in complex emotional terms, lead me to draw on research regarding the sociology of emotions. Hochschild (e.g., 1979, 1983) pioneered the explorations of emotions within the workplace, developing the concept of emotional labour that has been widely taken up within sociology (e.g., Steinberg & Figart, 1999). I build on this notion, and the work of other feminist sociologists (e.g., Colley, 2006; Reay, 2004a), whose theorisations of emotional capital have proved useful in understanding childcare workers' emotional engagement in what is often intense relational work. Pursuing this idea, and understanding that emotion work is always at some level ethical work, I also draw upon scholars whose sociological work has a more philosophical orientation, such as Sayer (e.g., 2005; 2011b) and Fraser (e.g., 2001; 2007). Their scholarship helped me to look beyond the field of carework to the ethical issues that shape all human societies. Both Fraser (2007) and Sayer (2011b) maintain that sociology often dodges the issue of justice, and that researchers stop short of outlining any concept of what constitutes human flourishing or suffering. Seeing this research as about human suffering or flourishing helps connect this small interview study of childcare workers to issues of greater significance. It encouraged me to examine what it means to do work – child-rearing – that is seemingly valuable (because it reproduces society physically and culturally) while being given the clear message, through paychecks and the attitudes of others, that it is worthless. The emotional and ethical commitment of workers is a response to this difficult dilemma, as they invest collectively in bringing meaning and purpose into what others consider as insignificant work, or even non-work.

Fraser (e.g., 2007) is well-known for her theoretical work bringing together material, cultural and political injustices, under the notion of participatory parity. This suggests that evaluating inequalities is both about outcomes and processes, about what the results are, but also how they are achieved. My research addresses both these aspects. The methodology of this study reflects the process aspect of participatory parity. Asking the opinions of workers is itself an intervention, reversing many of the existing power dynamics of the field, and valuing those who currently have little evidence of their own worth in the eyes of society. I also care deeply about research being able to affect change, and my aim has been to show the complexity and significance of childcare work, addressing the outcome aspect of participatory parity. This research aims to join with childcare workers in contesting the lack of value of childcare work. This lack of value was made abundantly clear in recent months when a university professor and former member of Australia's Fair Pay Commission described degree-qualified childcare workers as 'dim-witted graduates from second-rate universities' (Sloan, 2013b), during a nationally-transmitted current affairs show. If this

represents the views of the dominant classes about the most privileged childcare workers (in terms of educational capital), then it is not hard to imagine the levels of contempt for unqualified or casual childcare workers.

Original contribution to knowledge

The original contribution to knowledge of this study has three aspects. Firstly, it provides a new understanding of how workers engage in the power struggle around the value of childcare, by investing in a form of subcultural capital that I have called 'the committed worker'. Secondly, it brings to light the significant role of emotions and emotional work within the lives of workers, and how this helps them shape an ethical understanding of childcare work as meaningful. In doing so it adds a new interpretation to Bourdieusian scholarship around emotional capital, showing the importance of reflexivity in this process. Lastly, it shows how classed and gendered disadvantage intersect within the childcare field, producing a distinct form of shadow labour, and the impact this has on the wellbeing of workers and the wider childcare field. In the conclusion to this thesis I examine these findings in more detail, and draw out their implications for policy and practice.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to this study, looking at how childcare work has been researched and analysed across various disciplines. I begin with research focusing directly on childcare, looking at how issues such as professionalism or resistance have shaped childcare work, as well as examining how the intersections of various forms of inequality are conceptualised within research on childcare. Wanting a broader perspective on these issues, I then look beyond the childcare field to research on reproductive labour from a feminist perspective, particularly the areas of paid carework and unpaid mothering. In doing so I am able to get a clearer picture of what exploitation means in the field, as background to Chapter 5. Lastly, I address literature on emotions and morality, as these evolved as an important framework for my analysis of childcare work.

Chapter 3 provides a more detailed look at my theoretical framework, which is predominantly a feminist Bourdieusian approach. In doing so I talk about the theoretical tools I use to analyse this research, including Bourdieusian concepts such as capital, field, social space and discourse, as well as feminist theoretical concepts such as reproduction, the public/private dichotomy, and intensive mothering expectations. I use this chapter to expand on my theoretical understandings of emotional labour and emotional capital, and how I have built upon the work of feminist Bourdieusian scholars in this area. This chapter also shows how I understand morality and ethics from a theoretical perspective, including the key issue of reflexivity, which becomes important in Chapter 8.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology used in the thesis, as well as the ethical issues involved. The ethical issues addressed include the position of the researcher, consent and

participation, handling data, understandings of objectivity, and speaking on behalf of others. Methodologically, I show how my post-positivist approach frames my understanding of these ethical issues, and frames my understanding of what counts as data, its trustworthiness, including how these are affected by how it is collected and who does this. I outline the methods I used and the profiles of the research participants, and describe the process of data collection and analysis, drawing attention to the specific issues that arose in doing so.

Chapters 5 to 8 are the core of this thesis, foregrounding the views of childcare workers about their experiences. Each of these chapters uses a different lens (classing practices, work-value, gender relations, emotion work) with which to examine the data, providing a different angle on their investment in themselves as 'committed workers'.

Chapter 5 – 'Exploited work' - takes class and classing practices as its focus, and shows how maldistribution and misrecognition shape the low value of childcare work. I look at how workers are fixed within a particular classed location in the minds of others, that is encapsulated by the figure of 'the babysitter', an unskilled female figure. I suggest that the shame that accompanies such devalued expectations makes it harder for workers to contest perceptions of the value of childcare work, although they attempt to do so. I contend that childcare workers experience significant exploitation and explain how this has a number of serious effects, including an impact on staff turnover.

Chapter 6 – 'Worthwhile work' – continues the focus on class practices, but suggests that although their exploitation is significant, workers do not accept this passively. Instead many have taken up such work strategically, as a job that offers the possibility of value to them, even if its societal value seems low. I outline a particular group of workers' investment in themselves as committed and skilled caregivers, and show the qualities and values that form this subcultural capital. I contrast this 'grassroots' approach to the extensive research around the professionalisation of childcare, showing how this dilemma is experienced and contested by workers.

Chapter 7 – 'Maternal work' - takes up a gender lens to look at how the logic of the committed worker seen in the previous chapter is driven by the highly gendered nature of the childcare workforce, and its close association with the work of mothering. Making a parallel with the well-established idea of 'intensive mothering expectations', I show how childcare functions according to a set of 'intensive caregiving expectations', with similar (but not identical) high standards to those imposed on mothers. This chapter explores how these expectations can create stress, shame and guilt for both workers and mothers, and the ways these stresses play out within the relationships of the childcare field. The chapter demonstrates how childcare work, shaped by the capital holdings of those who work there, operates according to a distinctive cultural logic of child-rearing. This cultural logic combines dominant-class notions of intensive caregiving expectations with a more down-to-earth logic derived from the practical realities of these workers' lives in and out of childcare.

Chapter 8 - 'Ethical work' – the last of the data chapters, draws the themes of the previous chapters together, and shows how women's classed and gendered disadvantage may offer them insight into the emotional management of themselves and others. Drawing on my own interpretation of emotional capital – a concept developed by feminist Bourdieusian scholars (e.g., Reay, 2004a) – I show how this may be a useful way to challenge the perceived low value of childcare work. I point to the key place of reflexivity in understanding the ways that emotional labour may become embodied as emotional capital. I demonstrate that workers invest in their own emotional capital, in a variety of ways, both to help others, but also to enable themselves to survive the difficulties of their work. In doing so, I show that those interviewed for this study develop a profound and ethical understanding of the place of their work within society, and it is this that makes sense of their investment in themselves as committed workers, and their dedication to the field itself.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, synthesising what has been learnt from this research. It shows how the research contributes to the new field of the sociology of early childhood, and points to the limits of the research as well as the possibilities for future projects.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

This thesis seeks to answer the question of what kinds of meanings and value are attributed to the work done in long day care services. I explore how social class and gender combine to form a particular nexus of value for those who work with young children. The research questions that frame the study are;

How is childcare work shaped by patterns of value associated with social class and gender?

- *How do workers experience the lack of value and respect for childcare work?*
- *How do workers build regimes of value and respect in their job beyond the conventional devaluing of the field?*
- *How does the nature of the work, as relational and familial, affect workers' experience of value?*
- *How are existing discursive constructions of childcare value, such as professionalism or mother-like care, taken up by workers?*

This chapter sets this inquiry into childcare work within the wider frame of research around women's work, education and mothering. The childcare field constitutes a distinctive location of classed and gendered values, and I assess how existing literature addresses the issues faced by the childcare workforce. I begin by looking at the two dominant themes within the field, professionalisation and 'quality', and how these are often seen as interconnected. I then look more closely at the sociological attention that has been paid to gender issues, before examining the more fragmented body of literature around classing practices and childcare work. The childcare workforce is increasingly one of ethnic and cultural diversity, and although this is not a central analytical focus of this thesis, I show how the issues of race and class are entangled, acknowledging Warmington's point that there are not yet any 'non-racialized class relationships' (2009, p. 283) One of the recurrent themes in the thesis is how workers resist the lack of value attributed to their work, and so I look next at how this is understood within a childcare context. The field of childcare is not restricted to formal institutional settings, such as are the focus of this research, and I conclude this section on paid childcare by examining the relevance of research within home-based childcare (often called *family day care* in the Australian context) including the idea of shadow-work.

This research on paid forms of childcare provides the core research for this study, but needs to be supplemented by insights from related areas of research. Feminist research in the broad area of reproductive labour has been very useful in revealing aspects of childcare practice that may not have been apparent if analysed within too narrow a frame. The most important of these is research concerning 'motherwork', though other areas of carework, such as nursing or eldercare, manifest similar classed and gendered dynamics, and provide

an important analytical context for the thesis. The range of forms of reproductive labour all share the risk of exploitation among those who are labouring and I therefore look examine literature on exploitation, showing how this has been conceptualised within the childcare literature. Lastly I turn to research on emotions and morality, as these were persistent themes returned to by research participants in their interviews. I look at how morality has always been a force in the educational field, including childcare, even if this is often not made explicit. All of this research provides a context for examining the intersection of class and status issues within the lives of childcare workers, and reveals the values and value-judgements of childcare work.

Childcare work

The institution of the school has been a significant phenomenon internationally in the last one hundred and fifty years, since the advent of widespread compulsory schooling, yet early childhood services remain under-developed or absent in many countries, particularly those in the majority world. Even in minority world countries, such as those of Europe or North America, institutionalised early childhood services are a relatively recent phenomenon, and in most cases do not aim for universal provision of such services, in the way that public schooling does (J. Bennett, 2013). Nonetheless, the increasing importance of these services for governments and societies creates a need to understand the ways early childhood services may reinforce or ameliorate inequalities, either overtly or covertly.

In this section my focus will therefore be on those countries, predominantly in the minority world[4], with larger-scale early childhood systems, and the research that has addressed the lives of childcare workers. A significant body of research on the childcare field focuses attention at the macro-level, exploring the complexities of history and policy that have lead to the current state of the field in various countries (Brennan, 1998, 1999, 2007; Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Huntsman, 2005; Randall, 2000; Sumsion, 2006). While this is important, it only tangentially examines the impact history and government policy decisions have on those within the field, and the human costs of these decisions. This thesis addresses the effects of the resulting childcare environment on workers, an area that is documented much less comprehensively (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002).

Professionalism and quality

Exploring literature around childcare work reveals the intense focus on two issues in particular - professionalism (Adams, 2010; Brock, 2013; Chalke, 2013; Dayan, 2010; Lyons, 2012; Musgrave, 2010; Stonehouse, 1989, 1992; Whitington, Ebbeck, Diamond, & Yim, 2009) and ‘quality’ (Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, 2006; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Elliott, 2006; Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Helburn & Howes, 1996; Pocock et al., 2008; Tarrant, Greenberg, Lynn Kagan, & Kauerz, 2009). Indeed many writers see these as fundamentally interlinked, with quality only being possible with increased professionalism

(e.g., Cheeseman & Torr, 2009), with the link being the qualifications that are considered essential for professional standing (Dalli, 2010; Ishimine, 2011). The focus on professionalising the childcare workforce is understandable, given that this has been an important mechanism for school teachers in improving their status (Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000; Sachs, 2001; Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002), and because childcare workers have historically been very poorly paid (Brennan & O'Donnell, 1986; Helburn & Howes, 1996; Pocock & Hill, 2007; Whitebook, 1999). However an uncritical approach to professionalism risks ignoring the ways that it is used to regulate and exclude certain groups of workers (Wilkinson, 2005), and this process could exacerbate the already existing problems with turnover in long day care in Australia (Bretherton, 2010; Jovanovic, 2013).

This study questions whether professionalisation is the most useful way for childcare workers to contest the value of their work. Too often the existing childcare literature seems to have decided this issue *a priori*, without attempting to understand how it impacts on workers. The work done by Osgood (2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2012) on this issue has been valuable because class and gender remain in the foreground of her analysis of professionalism, giving her insight into the complexities of the issues faced by workers in their daily lives. Drawing on interview data with workers and ethnographic fieldnotes, her research highlights the ongoing struggle workers experience in seeing their work as valuable. Osgood (2012) shows how economic issues (pay, parent-fees), relational issues (children, parents, colleagues), as well as cultural issues around the status of the work, all materially impact on workers' lives. While other researchers certainly pay some attention to the importance of these issues in workers' lives (Brock, 2013; Elliott, 2006; Lyons, 2012), they often lack this sustained focus on the perspective of workers.

One often-unaddressed concern with professionalisation in early childhood is the reality that the power of 'the professional' may already be on the wane, given the rise in managerialism (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Healy, 2009). Within childcare this is most apparent in the rise of an audit culture (Osgood, 2010; Warin, 2014), where 'quality' becomes assessed through government-driven accreditation processes, rather than deriving from the expertise and autonomy of early childhood workers. Kinos (2010) insightfully observes that this has become a classification struggle by powerful groups over the meaning and definition of childcare work, while workers themselves find it nearly impossible to be professional, because of the low status attributed to their work. Warren (2013) depicts this struggle playing out for individual workers, where their lack of cultural and educational capital results in them struggling with the top-down demands for professional qualifications.

Gender and visibility

Beyond the more overt policy-level focus of issues around quality and professionalism, much childcare research has explored the highly-gendered nature of the workforce. Although an

overwhelming majority of the workforce is female, the majority of the research has focused on the 'absence' of men (Cameron, 2006; Cameron, Moss, & Owen, 1999; Lupton, 2000, 2006; Oberhuemer, Schreyer, & Neuman, 2010; Sumsion, 1999, 2005) or in a similar twist, the negative impact on boys of having 'too many' women in the field (Timmerman & Schreuder, 2008). This can be a frustrating experience when trying to disentangle how gender influences the lives of a group of *female* research participants.

Skeggs (2004a) influential work on class, gender and women's lives maintains that the wider symbolic economy (which regulates not just childcare workers, but researchers writing about it as well) operates according to 'prior historical classificatory schemes' (2004a, p. 75) which assign worth and value concerning gender and race (amongst other devalued social locations). It seems that the low value of women within the symbolic economy makes it difficult to see them as a meaningful focus of attention within childcare. Indeed, work by Galman and Mallozzi (2012) indicates that this phenomenon has affected researchers of primary education, as they found a distinct absence of concern about the issues of women teachers, despite their statistical dominance in that field. One aim of this research has been to make the work done by those in childcare more visible, despite its devalued status as female and menial work.

More usefully, some researchers have looked at the non-accidental nature of this gender imbalance, with young dominated-class women being actively steered into childcare work through school careers offices or vocational training (Colley, James, Tedder, & Diment, 2003). Others have asked important questions about the ways that the gendering of the workforce impacts on workers, such as Sargent's (2005) analysis of the constraints imposed on male workers' gendered performances or Murray's (1998, 2000, 2001) analysis of female workers' experiences in becoming 'familialised' through their childcare work. Murray raises a number of key issues that have proved important in this thesis, including the connections between childcare work and mothering, the difficulty in defending the value of the job, and the pressure to perform 'professional distance' (1998, p. 159) when this is at odds with the intense feelings aroused by the work.

Ailwood (2008) keeps a tighter focus on the interconnection between mothering and childcare practices, flagging the importance of maternalist discourses (explored more fully later in this chapter). Drawing on a poststructuralist feminist framework, she explores the history of early childhood education, and the ways that dominant early childhood theorists have contributed to enshrining women at the heart of early childhood work. Importantly - making the connection with professionalism - she shows how connections with motherhood undermine attempts to gain status in other ways, and have contributed to the ongoing low pay of childcare work.

Feminist poststructuralist psychologists have engaged in different ways in this debate in response to the early childhood field's privileging of developmental psychology within its

history, yet have arrived at similar conclusions. For example, Burman (1994) was one of the first to engage with the damaging assumptions made around gender norms within the field, around normative assumptions of women as caregivers, whether as mothers or substitute mothers. She also notes the obfuscation of terms like parenting, which disguise the fact that it is still largely mothering (by women) that is being discussed.

Making a parallel critique of schooling, and drawing on work by Foucault (1972, 1977) on the disciplinary power that operates through the education system, Walkerdine (1986) elucidates how women are positioned as the moral guardians of education, tasked with ensuring, whether as mothers, teachers, or caregivers, the correct raising of the 'normal' or 'natural' child. In later work she expands on this, laying the groundwork for arguments in this thesis about the pressures that are brought to bear on women throughout their lives, as they are coerced into caregiving roles, and then expected to be the good mother, the good teacher and the good daughter (Walkerdine, 1998; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). She also flags another issue of critical importance to this thesis, the notion that these expectations of women are classed in particular ways, so that the most criticism is directed at those women without access to valued forms of capital (Walkerdine, 2003).

Classed relations

While the inequalities of childcare work in terms of gender have been difficult to ignore, issues around classed inequalities are sometimes assumed only to matter in regard to the families served by childcare services, rather than workers themselves (e.g., Sebastian-Nickell & Milne, 1992). Ironically the cost of (formal) childcare means that it tends to be used much more by dominant-class or wealthier families, rather than those on low-incomes (Brennan, et al., 2009; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2012; Wrigley, 1991). These equity concerns for families have not been helped in Australia by the recent dominance of the for-profit childcare sector, whose services are not usually established in areas where childcare is needed, but those where parents can afford it (Australian Services Union, 2009; Brennan, 2007; Sumsion, 2006).

Some research on childcare identifies the low pay in the field as a concern, and assists in framing childcare work within the context of social class (Cortis & Meagher, 2012; Hill, Pocock, & Elliott, 2007; Masterman-Smith, et al., 2006). This research on pay and conditions is important, as equitable pay for childcare work continues to be minimised by the Australian government (e.g., Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012). However these studies do not explore the wider classed implications of this economic disadvantage, such as the divergent habitus and values engendered by different locations in social space. Scholars who pay attention to these wider classed implications have been described as 'cultural theorists' (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 51) and it is this sort of research that frames my own work.

There is an important group of researchers working out of the Institute of Education in London doing this sort of research around childcare (Ball, 2003; Braun, Vincent, & Ball, 2008, 2011; Vincent & Ball, 2006; Vincent & Braun, 2012). Although the focus of most of their work is on parenting practices, it provides a useful frame for some issues relevant to workers. For example, they address issues such as the difficulties some fathers have in identifying themselves as domestic workers and caregivers (as fully-engaged parents) due to the gendering of parents' roles (Braun, et al., 2011), or the work-ethic of dominated-class mothers which often counter-balances the traditional pressures towards stay-at-home mothering (Braun, et al., 2008).

When this work addresses issues centrally related to childcare work (Vincent & Braun, 2010, 2012), it has been helpful in developing a number of ideas in this thesis, such as the way young women from particular locations in social space are encouraged into this work, or the moral worth that is a key factor in women's investment in their jobs. This builds on Skeggs (1997) critical contribution to this field, in her exploration of dominated-class women's co-option into varying sorts of caring jobs, and their investment in both respectability and responsibility. As she observes, reflecting on the gendered and classed factors that shape those decisions, '[c]aring is something at which they are unlikely to fail' (Skeggs, 1997, p. 58). This body of work captures the common perception, among both workers and the wider community, that certain (female, low-status) people are destined for childcare work, because it is unchallenging menial work. Such connections between the classed and gendered status of the work have been made by researchers elsewhere, but often not developed in any detail (Brennan, 2007; Brennan & O'Donnell, 1986; O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002).

Like the research group from the Institute of Education, Ailwood (2008, 2012) addresses class issues in the early childhood field, as part of her exploration of maternalism. Importantly, she raises the issue of pay, and how gendered ideas of women's altruism have made it difficult for women in childcare work to win wage gains. Once again Osgood's (2005, 2012) work has been valuable due to its strong ethnographic focus, providing insight into the lived experiences of childcare workers in the UK, and the classed cultures that shape their work. For example, she draws attention to the commitment and personal investment that many workers in the field make (Osgood, 2005), even though this brings them little exchange value. This idea of commitment has been a central focus for the analysis within this thesis. The high levels of commitment by some workers was also highlighted in an analysis made by Bretherton (2010). Although the main focus of that study was the childcare industry's demand for labour, and the policies that might support it, her analysis has been constructive in a variety of ways. Specifically, I draw on her insight that these committed workers form a vital function within the childcare field, as a subgroup of workers who hold services together and are fundamental to sustaining many positive aspects of the field.

Lastly, taking a different angle on classing practices within the field, Nelson and Schutz (2007) examine how services are affected by the communities they serve. Drawing on research by Lareau (2003) they ask whether differing classed logics of caregiving operate in services representing areas of predominantly high or low economic capital. This raises interesting questions for this study about the origins of the values and attitudes of the childcare field in Australia, and what sorts of classed habitus this might be drawing upon.

Racial/cultural difference in childcare

The concept of intersectionality has been important within this thesis, in examining how varying forms of inequality - especially social class and gender - overlap, undermine or reinforce each other (Byrne, 2006; Hancock, 2007). The idea of intersectionality acknowledges that inequalities are not experienced by individuals in any simple additive way. For example in this study, judgements about respectability will involve judgements about someone's racial or cultural background as well as how they present in classed terms (Skeggs, 1997). Indeed respectability itself relies on understanding intersectionality, as it functions by using 'gendered values to block class misrecognition' (Skeggs, 2010, p. 33).

A number of scholars draw attention to the high representation of people of colour, or those from outside the majority culture, within childcare and other forms of care work (Bellm & Whitebook, 2006; Duffy, 2007; Glenn, 2010; Langford, 2010). Such research made me aware of the importance of paying attention to racial and cultural issues within this research. This is a way of acknowledging that no post-racial society yet exists, so there can be no post-racial sociology (Warmington, 2009). I am implicated in racial/cultural issues in two ways, with my white skin giving me symbolic power within Australia (T. Bennett, Frow, Hage, & Noble, 2013; Hage, 2000), while my experience of migration to Australia as a child gives me some understanding of the insider/outsider experience of other migrants to Australia.

Although race is not a central analytical concept in this thesis, I paid attention to it at a methodological level, as well as drawing out further responses from participants who brought up issues concerning racial and cultural difference in their interviews. I view race through a Bourdieusian framework as a cultural phenomenon that reveals prior schemes of value that limit those who cannot 'pass' as majority culture from accumulating capital as easily as those who do (Skeggs, 2004a). This analysis resonates with critiques from critical race theory that Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital reflects the values of the privileged, and specific racially-privileged groups (Yosso, 2005). This suggests that it is necessary to counter these hidden assumptions by articulating a robust concept of cultural capital that can reflect the existence of alternate schemes of cultural value within non-dominant groups, that constitute 'community cultural wealth' (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). This idea helped me articulate the idea of the committed worker as a form of community cultural wealth and subcultural capital within the childcare field.

One issue that I needed to pay attention to within my analysis was the way that inequality is embodied and manifests as particular gender, class or racial performances. When individual's marginalisation within society is a result of multiple inequalities, these performances cannot be easily disentangled, as a number of scholars have observed (Bettie, 1995, 2000; Reay, 2005). At both a collective and an individual level, I could see this playing out within the childcare field, in that many respondents' child-rearing values and philosophies reflected both their class and racial backgrounds, in addition to their experience growing up female, and these values combine into the distinctive occupational habitus of the field.

Resistance and childcare workers

Given that this thesis addresses the value of childcare work, it was clear that workers would often need to find ways to resist the low value that society had of their work and expertise. Indeed Bourdieu underlines that relations of domination create the possibility of resistance, and that those who are part of any field, such as the childcare field, must necessarily be able to produce effects within it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 80). However, reflecting the generally limited attention within early childhood research to the agency of workers, there is little said about workers' resistance to their own exploitation, as Jovanovic (2013) observes.

Large-scale resistance, such as strike action, is very rare, and only one significant strike of centre-based childcare workers seems to have occurred among countries with formal childcare provision in place (Gall, 2004). Given the preoccupation with professionalism within the field, a number of researchers have sought to articulate a concept of resistance from within this framework (Douglass & Gittell, 2012; Fenech, Sumsion, & Shepherd, 2010; Musgrave, 2010). More often the resistance of workers is limited to noting their dislike of terms such as 'babysitting', that function to devalue their work and skills (e.g., Adams, 2010; Shpancer et al., 2008).

Certainly participants in this research were adamant that their work was much more complex and valuable than just babysitting. However, as I argue in the thesis, their resistance was manifested in a variety of ways which depended on their own experience of being valued, or on their belief that such resistance might make a difference. My own concept of resistance among childcare workers resonates most with a suggestion from Steedman (1985). In discussing the dominant discourses of the early childhood field, and workers' reaction to them, she suggests that '[t]he place where this ideology meets other, half-articulated, 'common-sense' theories about childhood, is a shadowy one' (Steedman, 1985, p. 158). This captures the sense of dis-ease that workers tried to articulate, when their familial habitus, and the resulting 'feel for the game' of child-rearing, was at odds with the expectations of the childcare field.

Paid childcare in the home

Although the issue of social class is not usually the focus of research on centre-based childcare practices it comes through more strongly in literature around the other main form of paid childcare for young children - home-based care. This seems to be because home-based caregivers lack the institutional and collective support that comes with centre-based care (including better-regulated wages and conditions) and so are more likely to experience exploitation (Anderson, 2000; Aronson & Neysmith, 1996; Bowman & Cole, 2009; Constable, 2007; Rollins, 1985; T. Taylor, 2011; Wrigley, 1995). This exploitation is a structural feature of the work (Rollins, 1985), rather than an effect of the disadvantaged class or racial status of the workers, given that a significant minority of these workers enter this work with more cultural and economic capital (L. Law & Nadeau, 1999). These structural effects of the work have a long history, as is clear from Haskins' (2009) research about young Aboriginal Australian women becoming domestic servants in the early part of the 20th Century. These women moved from a situation of relative advantage in their home communities, as light-skinned women advantaged within a racist colonial system, to domestic service, where in comparison to their white employers they were again seen as 'black', in addition to their low status as domestic workers.

I have drawn upon literature around home-based care in this research, not just in terms of exploitation, but in terms of the sorts of relationships experienced by workers when involved in caring for other people's children. It was this body of research that most clearly showed the intimacy of this caregiving relationship, and the ways it functions as a visceral and emotional form of substitute mothering (Cheever, 2002; Uttal, 1993). Especially valuable has been Macdonald's (1998, 2010) analysis of childcare work as shadow work, and workers as shadow mothers, in linking the classed practices of work with the gender dynamics of parenting.

The many connections between the work of childcare in the home and in centre-based situations becomes most apparent in the work done by O'Connell (2010, 2011). Her research on family day care in the UK parallels and provides a context for much of my analysis in this thesis. She stresses a range of issues that are present throughout the thesis, such as childcare work's position at the nexus of public and private, the assymetry in power between parents and workers (to the parents' advantage), the classed and raced nature of the workforce, and the ways that class becomes embodied in daily practices, such as providing food. Perhaps most significantly, she is critical of the process of professionalisation, and the ways that optimism about it functions to ignore the gendered lack of value of childcare work (O'Connell, 2011).

Reproductive labour and feminist materialist research

Given the limitations of the literature on paid childcare concerning the central issues within this thesis, I have found it helpful to look at broader research on 'women's work'. There is an extensive body of feminist research on reproductive labour, highlighting work done by women that maintains and perpetuates societies in ways often invisible to mainstream sociology. Two aspects of this have been particularly relevant: firstly research on mothering, and secondly, research on other forms of carework, such as eldercare or nursing. This latter work must be used with some caution, however, as childcare has a very different history and politics from schooling, from nursing, and from other forms of carework. Of this research, I have relied more on those scholars whose work is compatible with a Bourdieusian framework, though a variety of approaches to intersectionality have contributed to developing my own perspective.

Reproductive labour

The work done by those in childcare sits squarely within feminist delineations of reproductive labour, encompassing both the emotional and caring labour of looking after children, as well as the 'dirty' work of cleaning up, serving and preparing food, toileting and so on. Reproductive labour is often seen as happening only within the private sphere, though much carework, such as the institutional childcare studied in this thesis, happens in public settings. A better distinction between labour for reproduction or production might be the invisibility of reproduction (Arat-Koc, 2001; Johnston & Swanson, 2003; T. Warren, 2011), which is often ignored in mainstream economic accounts. For example, Marx suggested that domestic labour was of 'microscopic significance' and could be 'entirely neglected' (Marx [1867] quoted in McDowell, 2008a, p. 158).

Duffy (2005, 2007) provides a useful overview of the field of reproductive labour, exploring who does this work, and in which contexts, historically and currently. Most notably, she has drawn attention to the distinctiveness of childcare work, which unlike other forms of reproductive labour, has remained much more clearly gendered as female work, whether performed in the home or institutionalised settings. One of her main arguments, discussing reproductive work other than childcare, is that as this work has moved into the public sphere, being performed as service rather than domestic work, there has been a significant increase in men performing these tasks. This observation forces an examination of why childcare may be different, consolidating the sense that its close links with mothering may be critical.

Duffy, along with other scholars, such as Glenn (2010) or Dyer and her colleagues (2008), have shown the raced and classed divides that occur in reproductive labour. This often replicates old divisions between mental and manual work, which plays out in childcare practices when a distinction is drawn between teachers/educators/qualifieds and aides/assistants/unqualifieds. Such a distinction often disguises broad differences in the

economic and cultural background of those employed in such roles. However classed and raced divides exist also in the cultural values around reproductive labour, such as the existence of phenomena like 'othermothering' (Collins, 2006; Foster, 1993; O'Brien Hallstein, 2008; Wane, 2000). The idea of othermothering is that in some communities - and this particular term comes from the African-American tradition (Collins, 2006) – the work of mothering is conceptualised very differently, with much more of a sense of collective responsibility for children than the individual one outlined next. Foster's (1993) examination of the place of othermothering in school teachers' understanding of their work gave me a sense that this could provide an alternate and perhaps more sympathetic way to understand childcare work than the idea of babysitting. Traditions of othermothering show that paid childcare, particularly situations like home-based care, can sometimes be driven by the sorts of selflessness attributed to mothering, and need not be equated with servitude (Collins, 2006).

Mothering

Childcare cannot be understood without understanding the politics of child-rearing more generally, and how this has been fundamentally shaped by gendered power relations (Baird, 2008; Johnston & Swanson, 2006; McNay, 1999). My understanding of 'motherwork' in this thesis draws on both material and discursive understandings of this phenomenon. Although long day care work differs from mothering work in location, being usually practiced in large institutional and public settings rather than in private homes, there is almost no difference in the content and practices[5] of the work that is done by mothers and childcare workers.

This is not surprising when these two forms of work have mutually informed each other over a long period. Various scholars, from the fields of carework, education and mothering, have noted the complex intertwining of mothering and teaching/caregiving practices in the last century and a half (Ailwood, 2008; Hardyment, 2007; Steedman, 1985; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Yeo, 2005). This usually underlies attempts to intervene in classed practices, such as 'bad' mothers from dominated-class communities around the turn of the nineteenth century being taught how to mother by 'professional nurses' (Hardyment, 2007). Similar classed values were behind the dynamic discussed by Yeo (2005), where paid caregivers were encouraged to be more like the sacrificing mother-figure, and work for minimal or no wages to avoid the corrupting influence of money. There are many similar stories, sometimes with mothers being expected to model themselves on childcare 'professionals', and at other times those paid workers being expected to model themselves on the assumed altruism and empathy of mothers. The commonality in these stories is the domination and surveillance of those women who lack access to cultural and economic capital, which continues into the present day (Baird, 2008; Gillies, 2007; Lawler, 2000), and provides the backdrop for this analysis of women as workers in the childcare field. Lareau (2003) updates this historical picture, by elucidating the differing class practices of parenting in the present-day. This

research demonstrates the emphasis on 'concerted cultivation' practices by those parents with most cultural capital, highlighting the dominant child-rearing values at work in both mothering and paid childcare settings.

Delphy and Leonard (1992), in an early and influential piece of work, argue that the construction of the gender order has come about through the necessity of exploiting women's labour in the home. Rather than assuming the existence of two biologically-based genders, one of whom is more 'naturally' suited to child-rearing, they maintain that these genders continue to be constructed in response to current understandings of the world, in order to allow one of these groups – men – to continue to exploit the other to maintain a systemic advantage. They argue that the politics of reproduction are fundamentally different from the politics of production. I draw on their work to show that the work of childcare, despite happening in the public sphere, operates on a different premise from that of most other work. Their work has been fleshed out by McMahon (1999), focusing on Australian familial relations, who looks more closely at how men of all classes particularly and specifically benefit from women's labour in the domestic setting. His work is especially helpful around issues of 'love labour' – emotional labour – and the necessity of understanding how this can be simultaneously pleasurable and exploitative.

Bubeck (1995), drawing on a more philosophical framework, has criticised Delphy and Leonard's work for failing to show any mechanism by which women are able to be exploited so systematically within the home. Bubeck, though generally sympathetic to their arguments, was aiming to develop an analytical framework within which the material inequalities of women could be understood. Her thesis is that exploitation occurs because of a care deficit that opens up when some (mostly men) actively refuse to care for others, either materially or emotionally, while others, whether reluctantly or unreservedly, take on these tasks. This has been useful in thinking about the tensions many childcare workers feel about what they do, which they see as valuable but also sometimes resent. Bubeck's work opens up an intellectual space in which to understand the role of discourse around reproductive work. It is the discursive construction of masculinity in particular, and the ways this is framed around being 'not-female' – maintaining a reluctance to care – which perpetuates the gendered divisions in domestic and caring labour. There is some interesting research that documents this reluctance to care among men, indicating the slowness of change in the domestic division of labour (van Egmond, Baxter, Buchler, & Western, 2010), the ease with which men let go of parenting responsibilities (T. Miller, 2011), and even the slowness and difficulty of entrenching alternative gender norms within heterosexual couples who want to parent differently (Chesley, 2011).

Intensive mothering expectations

In recent decades, under the influence of feminism, women have increasingly been gaining access to more economic and cultural capital. While it was once only women from

disadvantaged locations in social space who needed to work, increasingly more wealthy or culturally-advantaged women have moved away from fulltime and lifetime mothering to undertake paidwork (Acker, 2006). Although this would suggest that mothering would have become less significant in women's life, in fact the opposite seems to be true (Arnup, 1994; O'Brien Hallstein, 2008; Vincent, 2010). Discourses about the sacredness of children (Baird, 2008; Blackford, 2009; Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000; Little, 2010; Zelizer, 1985, 2011), or the 'natural' inclination of women to care and mother (Bergmann, 2005; Griffin, 2008; Reskin, 1988; Stevenson & Clegg, 2012; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989) have become more intense, constraining women into more stressful lives, as they attempt to do it all (Armstrong, 2006; T. Miller, 2011). Craig (2006) documents the practical realities of this process, illustrating that 'workload increases associated with having a child disproportionately fall upon women' (2006, p. 135). Her work shows clearly that while women without children may claim to have benefited from the changes brought by feminism, for those who become mothers such benefits are more illusory.

The most notable contribution in this field is Hays (1996, 2000), who picks up on the idea from Delphy and Leonard (1992) that ideologies of gender are always changing in response to the struggle over the gendered division of labour. One of her main findings is that the pressure on women in terms of mothering have intensified in recent decades. She argues that this is a deliberate strategy by those who benefit from women's unpaid labour to maintain those benefits, despite women's increasing access to autonomy and economic capital in the workplace. Taking a Foucauldian line, she argues that ideological coercion is much more effective than physical (Hays, 1996, p. 165). In suggesting that intensive mothering is 'a historically-constructed *cultural model* for appropriate childcare' (Hays, 1996, p. 21; emphasis in original) her work leaves room for my arguments about the similar construction of appropriate *paid* childcare practice.

This idea of intensive mothering expectations has become a significant focus for research in the last fifteen years. Vincent (2010), mapping out this emerging sociology of mothering, discusses the issue of 'professional mothering' (2010, p. 113), the phenomenon whereby what has usually been assumed to be the 'natural' abilities of women has become dominated by (often male) experts, whose work is supposed to guide women to do mothering right. Picking up on Hays' (1996) discussion of the classed dynamics of intensive mothering, Vincent discusses how the dominant-class ideals of intensive mothering have become the dominant discourse, forcing all those who 'mother' (whether paid or unpaid) to justify any deviance from such practices, and thus producing new notions of 'the bad mother' (2010, p. 118). This idea, that mothering contains normative classed and racial overtones, has been observed widely by other scholars (Braun, et al., 2008; Gillies, 2007; Lawler, 2000; O'Brien Hallstein, 2008; T. Taylor, 2011), and such research has helped shape my understanding in this study about the ways that paid childcare does not just reflect gendered inequalities, but

also maintains and reinscribes other types of inequality. This notion of intensive mothering expectations provides the backbone of my arguments in chapter 7 about how paid and unpaid 'mothering' function to reinforce the constraints on women as reproductive labourers.

Home-'school' relations

The relationship between parents and workers/teachers is a challenging one in schooling, (Blackmore, 1994; Blackmore & Hutchinson, 2010; Gillies, 2006; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002) and perhaps even more so in childcare (Faragher & MacNaughton, 1990; Haylett, 2002; Uttal, 1996; Wyver et al., 2010). Crozier (2000) draws attention to the painful complexities at work in this relationship, and the ways it is often premised on dominant-class notions of what both schooling and parenting should be, such as the values of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003). Crozier's analysis helped clarify the classed dynamics at work in the relationships between parents and workers within this research, causing me to question the optimistic assumptions made about equal partnerships in much early childhood research (Keyser, 2006; Scott et al., 2007). Nonetheless, the power dynamics of this relationship in childcare are necessarily quite different from schooling, both because the institutions are differently conceived, as service industry versus government institution, and because the status of the childcare workforce tends to be substantially lower than that of school teachers.

Carework

Having looked at how analysis of reproduction within the private sphere of home and family might be applied to childcare work, I look now towards other forms of institutional caring, such as eldercare and nursing, to show how these demonstrate some similar classed and gendered exploitation. Sociological literature focused on childcare frequently references the low-paid nature of the work, or the 'working-class' background of those who work in the field (e.g., Vincent & Braun, 2010). The low-status of the work has become taken-for-granted, and it is important to understand how and why this should be so. The entanglement of gender and class is significant, leading some to argue that women have become the archetypal exploitable workforce within capitalist systems, a sort of female proletariat (Adkins, 1995). Research within other fields of carework have attempted to tease out some of these taken-for-granted assumptions, indicating some productive directions for analysis in this thesis.

Pay and conditions in carework

Carework epitomises women's work, because it draws upon forms of undervalued capital predominantly held by, or associated with women (Huppatz, 2009). As Bubeck's (1995) analysis suggests, the usually-constrained choice to take up a caring role or not plays a significant role in shaping power relations in our society, particularly in terms of gender, but also in terms of class (Skeggs, 1997), disability (Lister, 2007) and race (Glenn, 2010). These

unequal power relations are reflected in the lower wages found in carework jobs such as childcare.

Work from within feminist economics has been useful in revealing this phenomenon within economic data. This research shows that the discursive construction of carework – as outside the economic, and as altruistic rather than materialistic - has very real material effects in terms of a pay penalty for all jobs that rely on the skills of care (England, et al., 2002; England & Folbre, 1999). They show this pay penalty to be the greatest for work most closely identified with a domestic caring role, such as childcare or family day care (England, et al., 2002), whether such work is performed by women or men. In general though, because of the highly segregated nature of the whole workforce (Bergmann, 2005; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013), and segregation within workplaces, where women and men tend to do different jobs (Reskin, 1988), this pay penalty falls hardest on women. This feminist devaluation theory has been validated by a number of meta-analyses of research on carework, demonstrating the significance of this phenomenon (England, 2005; Perales, 2013).

The most useful research within this field analyses the assumed dichotomy between intrinsic motivations for carework and extrinsic ones, such as the work by Julie Nelson and Nancy Folbre (Folbre, 1995; Folbre & Nelson, 2000; J. Nelson, 1999). Their research challenges the commonly held assumption that the emotional rewards of childcare work can compensate women for the low external rewards of the work, such as the low wages. This dilemma is at the heart of the issues discussed in this thesis, and picks up on the arguments about women's altruism mentioned earlier. Most of the literature on professionalisation within early childhood has the implicit assumption that if workers build their educational capital then this will inevitably generate economic capital. Feminist economists show that this is unlikely to be true, with workers across a range of fields and educational levels experiencing this pay penalty. England's (2005) research raises questions too about audit processes within childcare, which have usually been connected to presumptions about quality improvement, and raising the value of the work. This research demonstrates that such surveillance often has the opposite effect from that intended, undermining intrinsic motivations for this work, and damaging the quality of practice in such fields. Cortis and Meagher (2012) provide a useful Australian perspective on this work, showing how changes are occurring in the understanding of the exploitation involved in feminised fields of work, while acknowledging that these continue to be contested and opposed by those who dominate the field of power. These arguments about motivation within carework inform my understandings of the meanings workers make about childcare practices, and the values that are attributed to it from outside versus those they hold themselves.

Relationships of care

Waerness (1984), in an influential examination of the field of carework, outlines some of the key issues that shape the field, such as the assumption that women do not really need to work, the naturalisation of women's emotional capacities, the dilemmas around issues of public and private, the problems with professionalisation and so on. She makes a particularly interesting point about carework practices, arguing that;

> *we have to ask what kind of knowledge is relevant in order to deal with problems that cannot be mastered by finding the perfect techniques or by acting according to bureaucratic rules, but where the quality of the work still depends on the actors' training and skills* (Waerness, 1984, pp. 193-194)

In doing so she points to the fundamental relationality of care, that makes it different from many other forms of work. Some work may be able to be improved through prescribing particular processes that are more efficient, whereas relational work is always context- and person-specific, requiring practical wisdom (Sayer, 2011b; Waerness, 1984). Carework relies on meeting needs that change from moment to moment, and in situations where the particular skills and understanding of the caregiver, and the needs of the person being cared for, can never be identical. The challenge is to find ways to improve care without falling victim to the delusion that is perfectible via top-down prescriptions for how it should be done.

Work within feminist geography, such as by McDowell and colleagues (Dyer, et al., 2008; McDowell, 2007, 2008a) underscores the relational nature of carework, showing how gender, class and race all become implicated in caring practices. This body of research draws attention to the dangers for childcare workers in framing themselves in familial ways (i.e., 'mothering' children) rather than as educators. One study examining the UK health service (Dyer, et al., 2008) unpacks some of the complexities of how gender, class and race interact, denaturalising many of the assumptions that are made about 'menial' labour. For example, certain forms of menial work, because of their caring aspects, advantage women over their male colleagues, because of assumptions about women's more highly developed emotional skills (McDowell, 2008a). These studies also reinforce the earlier point about the classed dynamics of parent-worker partnerships, showing how dominant-class women's work depends fundamentally on the paid childcare provided by (mostly) less-advantaged women (McDowell, 2007). Yet as I show in this thesis, 'co-presence [of workers and mothers] and relations of obligation, affection, and trust muddy the language of class struggle' (McDowell, 2008a, p. 160).

Exploitation and inequality

In the section on reproductive labour I outline a feminist perspective on women's exploitation, specifically the gendered exploitation of mothers within home settings. This section looks at exploitation in regard to childcare, asking how and if this is talked about by researchers within this field. In looking at exploitation in childcare I draw upon a general definition of

exploitation that encompasses the totality of exploitation potentially experienced by childcare workers;

> *we can say that* exploitation exists when one group of people satisfy their interests at the expense of the satisfaction of the interests of another group. *This is a very general definition and it encompasses a wide variety of exploitations: It can be used to identify sexual exploitation, cultural exploitation, and, most important for our present purposes, material exploitation.*(E. O. Wright, Howe, & Cho, 1989, p. 187; emphasis in original)

The groups of people who are satisfying their interests at the expense of the childcare workforce may vary, so governments satisfy their need for available workers by making policies that keep childcare wages low (thus making childcare accessible for otherwise occupied female workers), while higher-paid women (though actually all parents) exploit workers by being able to hand off the care of their children in order to do more satisfying work.

Understanding the roots of exploitation in childcare work requires understanding its history. Foucault (1977) usefully explores how exploitation arises from particular forms of discipline, transmitted through institutions such as schools and factories. Exploitation involves subjectification, inducing docility in workers and students so that their productive capacity can be used to advantage by the dominant classes in society. Mohanty (2003) expands on Foucault's point about docile bodies, in drawing attention to global exploitation of women's labour.

Bourdieu (2001) makes a useful point about exploitation in his discussions of gendered inequality. He reminds sociologists that it is important not to create 'an idealized representation of the oppressed and the stigmatized in the name of fellow-feeling, solidarity or moral indignation, and to pass over in silence the very effects of domination, especially the negative ones' (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 114). It is important to recognise the capital that workers do have and to respect them in this way. However it may also be necessary to acknowledge those times when workers appear not to struggle against their own exploitation, as noted earlier. Bourdieu's point is that this apparent apathy may be the result of the effects of long-term domination, in both classed and gendered terms.

However there seems to be a general reluctance to acknowledge the exploitation of childcare workers within the field, perhaps because this ought not to be possible if they are indeed becoming autonomous professionals. Some researchers, like Pocock and her colleagues (2008), create a vivid picture of the exploitative conditions in the field, without actually naming this process. Others make reference to exploitation, but only in passing, thus underplaying the significance of this for workers (Aubrey, 2011; Moss, 2006). Simms (2006) clearly understands the exploitative pay and conditions of childcare work, but sees this as being counterbalanced by the vocational rewards many feel in doing what they see as valuable work. Although it is important that she calls attention to the 'exploitation of

vocational passion' (Simms, 2006, p. 1) and acknowledges the lack of value for childcare work that is at the heart of this, the focus on the rewards of the work ends up undermining the significance of the exploitation.

Connecting the exploitation of the work back to discourses about the value of children, as articulated in research on intensive mothering and in discussions of childcare quality, Prentice (2009) explores the renewed interested in the economic case for quality early childhood provision. She argues strongly that feminist aims for childcare provision that is good for workers, not just children and their mothers, are being lost in the rush to profit from children, whether this is corporatised childcare chains, or governments capitalising on the economic multiplier supposedly generated by investments in childcare provision.

The work that best encapsulates this section on reproductive labour is research by Grace (1998, 2001, 2002). Her interview and focus-group study of Australian mothering puts the spotlight on women's exploitation, whether in the private sphere as mothers, or in the public sphere, in providing care for others (Grace, 2002). She ties together a lot of themes from this section, such as the demanding and embodied nature of this work, its low value culturally and materially, the undermining of women's claims to more equitable working lives by the focus on their altruism, and the alternate rewards that supposedly compensate for their exploitation (Grace, 1998).

A number of commentators have noted that the idea of exploitation is fundamentally a moral and ethical issue, a question of values, and of how people are valued (Bowman & Cole, 2009; Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Rollins, 1985; Sayer, 2011b). To talk about exploitation of childcare workers as women, or as low-waged workers, is to make a moral argument about the wrongs that they experience, and the damage to society that happens when people are exploited. Hence the next section, which deals in part with morality, explains why this thesis also engages in ideas around what is good and right, and seeks to make claims about the value and meaning of childcare work.

Morality and emotions in childcare

In exploring the value of childcare work, I had not expected that I would talk about moral issues, which often seem far from a sociological perspective. However to talk about value and respect within childcare almost inevitably assumes some moral framework, even if this goes unacknowledged. In this section I look briefly at some literature that addresses the morality of educational work, although this is dealt with in more depth in the next chapter, as I look at the theoretical framework used in this research. I then give an overview of how emotions and emotional expression has been taken up in the childcare literature.

There is increasing acknowledgement that all educational work requires a personal sense of commitment, and that this commitment operates within a moral frame (Day, 2013; Day & Gu, 2007; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Nussbaum, 2010). Often this moral

frame is expressed through feelings, such as the respect or contempt that usually demarcates class boundaries, including those between teachers and parents (O'Donoghue, 2012; Sayer, 2005, 2007; Sennett, 2003). That is because, as Hochschild has consistently argued, 'feeling rules reflect patterns of social membership' (1979, p. 564). This social membership can be class membership, in which case the feeling rules reflect what could be called emotional habitus (Bourdieu, 1990a). Otherwise it might be the social membership of being a teacher or a childcare worker, or the sorts of feelings that mothers are believed to have as a group. In all cases people become invested in their identity as a member of that group, and their commitment to the group causes them to invest in the normative emotional expressions that Hochschild (1979) describes.

Moral judgements of reproductive labour

The morality that I discuss in this thesis is related to the values that childcare workers hold about their own work, and the ways they must assert and defend these in the face of others' judgements. As Randall has noted, debates about childcare are always 'emotionally and morally highly charged' (2000, p. 137). These moral judgements could be seen at work earlier in the chapter, looking at the interrelatedness of mothering and caregiving historically, and the sorts of judgements that are made about 'bad mothers' or 'negligent caregivers' (e.g., Yeo, 2005). The heart of Skegg's (1997) arguments about dominated-class women entering carework, is that they do so to avoid the shame that is the result of the class contempt they have experienced, and they counteract this by investing in themselves as respectable and responsible caregivers. More recently this point has been made by Vincent and Braun (2010), who underline that the women they interviewed chose childcare work over hairdressing (both similarly accessible, and with similar wages) because of the moral worth that could be accrued through caregiving. Yet acquiring moral worth is not simple or easy, and women must work hard to acquire these skills and dispositions. Even harder is to get recognition for these skills as meaningful, without having them naturalised as something women are, thus erasing all the effort and energy goes into them, as Steinberg and Figart (1999) document in their overview of research about emotional labour. In the next section I look at these emotions, and the ways that they have been discussed and taken up within the childcare literature.

Childcare and emotions

Emotions are inescapable in childcare work. As Reay has observed '[c]hildcare is made up of a complex amalgam of practical, educational and emotional work' (2000, p. 571). It was once thought that to be a good childcare 'professional' it was necessary to inhibit those emotions, showing 'detached attachment' (M. Nelson, 1994). Nelson (1994) was one of the first to critique the absurdity of this idea, given how much energy and emotion workers invest in their job. This insight was reinforced by Murray (1998) who acknowledged children's unfettered

emotional engagement with their caregivers, and the reciprocity this demanded from workers. These relationships are 'emotionally-laden and physically intimate relationships' (Murray, 1998, p. 163), in a way unrecognised by calls for 'detachment'.

Increasingly the childcare field is acknowledging the importance of engaged and emotionally-aware teachers (Douglass & Gittell, 2012; Elfer, 2013), even to the extent that it is being included within curriculum documents at a national level (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). However this should not simply be a way to increase the total workload of those in the field, by adding demanding emotional work to the educational and practical aspects of the job, or be seen somehow as a compensatory reward for other hard work (Prentice, 2009). In her research with home-based caregivers, Wrigley noted that they objected to the idea that 'emotional rewards should substitute for economic ones' (1995, p. 87). Anderson (2000) backs up such a concern, understanding that investment in these emotional relationships leads to workers being more vulnerable to exploitation.

My analysis of emotion in childcare draws on the feminist framing of emotions as labour, through foundation research done by Hochschild (1979, 1983) and the understanding that these are then capable of being exploited within the workplace. Examining how this emotional labour can function as a form of capital within educational work (Reay, 2000, 2004a, 2005), allows some of the classed and gendered dynamics of the field to be analysed in beneficial ways. This is seen most clearly in Colley's (2006) examination of the processes at work in moulding beginning childcare workers. In particular she observes how it is the moral values attributed to childcare that drives these student's commitment (2006, p. 22ff.), even when the emotional labour they are doing is demanding. Vincent and Braun (2010, 2012) reinforce the connections of emotion with morality in childcare, and frame this within debates about the gendering of care that are taking place within sociological work around emotions and mothering. Work on this emotional and moral commitment of workers in Australian childcare settings is difficult to find, although Jovanovic (2013) usefully draws attention to the demands of emotional labour in childcare, and the ways this may be increasing the turnover levels in the workforce. Similarly, Bretherton notes workers' defence of the 'emotional knowledge' (2010, p. 29) needed in the job, and the ways these skills can be used to assert the value of the work against its diminishment as mere babysitting. However neither of these make explicit the link between emotional engagement and a sense of moral purpose, in the ways I expand upon in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have charted the small amount of literature that is devoted to childcare work, highlighting some of the features of the work that receive most attention, and those, such as social class, that have often been overlooked. My own research extends on this literature,

employing a broad sociological lens to examine the issues raised by research participants about their own experiences of work in Australian childcare settings. In doing so I have drawn upon feminist scholarship across the field of reproductive labour, showing how debates around mothering and eldercare provide an important analytical framework for my own explorations of childcare work, as well as drawing attention to the ways that morality and emotional understanding are implicated within all forms of carework. The wider context of feminist materialist research demonstrates that the low-value of childcare work is not accidental, but an economy-wide phenomenon linked to the devaluing of women's work across all fields. Most such roles are considered women's work due to their association with either care or emotional understanding, confirming Bubeck's (1995) arguments about care, gender and exploitation.

Having provided a sense of the landscape of the childcare field, and my concerns about gender, class and the value of work, I can now map out my theoretical understanding of this material. The next chapter takes up this challenge, showing how I build on feminist post-structuralist as well as Bourdieusian scholarship to create a critical and conceptual framework for my research.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Introduction

This thesis has a dual focus, examining the classed and gendered practices of childcare work. Therefore my theoretical framework draws on feminist theories of gendered inequalities, whether in the home or in jobs associated primarily with women, as well as particular forms of class analysis, especially Bourdieu's work (e.g., 1984). This theoretical framework must be able to address the questions raised in this research, which are about the value of childcare work, and how this is experienced and felt by workers themselves, within their work and personal relationships.

In this chapter I show the conceptual tools that I draw upon to answer these questions, which come out of both a Bourdieusian and feminist theoretical approach, such as the concepts of *capital* and *field*, as well as feminist theories such as *intensive mothering* or the *public/private* dichotomy. In looking at the field of childcare, which is staffed mostly by women with little access to economic or cultural capital, I need theoretical tools that can understand their experiences. A critical feminist perspective, drawing on both materialist and discursive scholarship, has enabled me to understand better some of the key issues facing childcare workers.

Class as classification

The first problem I need to address regarding social class is that many researchers historically have not addressed their own role within classed dynamics. As a post-positivist researcher I am forced to recognise the ways that I am implicated in various forms of classed relations, whether as a worker in a childcare centre, as a graduate student researcher, or in any other contexts in which I interact. To address class as a researcher I must know how I classify it, why I classify it in this way, and what the consequences of this are. On this point, Bourdieu himself suggests that a 'sociology of sociology' is a 'necessary prerequisite of any rigorous sociological practice' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 68).

The classing gaze

Foucault (1977) is well-known for his analysis of the changing methods of disciplinary power in the modern era, particularly the nineteenth century, when both mass education and childcare began. He draws attention to the ways classification enables those in power to assign particular people to particular roles, whether in the workplace, in a school, or in society. Developing a similarly historical analysis, Finch (1993) shows how the ideas of 'middle class' and 'working class' were first articulated in the nineteenth century, and how these have always been intimately linked to moral ideas, such as respectability and gendered embodiment, both of which are central ideas in this thesis. Her naming of 'the classing gaze' acts as a powerful reminder of the sociological gaze[6] that is always being

mobilised within any class analysis, and the caution that needs to be exercised with this. Walkerdine (2003) makes a similar argument about morality being implicated in class labelling, and shows how psychology remains one of the key tools used for classification within education.

Complexities within classed experiences

There are many complexities to class analysis, and Bottero (2004) describes the evolution of such analysis within sociological research, particularly in recent decades. One particularly useful insight of hers is that class is systematically misrecognised by all members of society, because our reference groups (i.e., those we compare ourselves to) tend to be drawn from broadly similar locations in social space, and so we all feel 'ordinary' or 'middling' even if we might be very rich, or quite poor (Bottero, 2004, p. 998). So as a researcher I feel 'ordinary' among my academic friends and colleagues, but often deeply out of place in talking with some interviewees about their different experiences in the world. This is a reminder that class as felt or experienced may differ widely, if not completely, from traditional sociological expectations of an individual's 'location'. This thesis, therefore, seeks to understand what the class processes childcare workers experience mean for them as individuals and for the field. Connell and colleagues were among the first to draw attention to this relational aspect of class, asking not "'In which class is this person?' but rather, 'Into which class relations does this person enter?'" (1982, p. 145). It is this 'cultural' approach to class that forms the basis of the class analysis within the thesis.

Class as intersectional

To acknowledge class as relational is to understand that class will always be experienced in tandem with other historical schemes of value, particularly gender and race (Skeggs, 2004a). Drawing out the implications of how these differing measures of value interact, overlap or undermine each other, has been a significant focus within feminist scholarship, such as the broad theoretical work by Fraser (2001, 2007), as well as the literature on intersectionality discussed in the previous chapter. An understanding of the intersection of class and gender in childcare is one of the important contributions made by this research. As Tuominen suggests;

> *A theory rooted in the norms of formal-sector commodity production fails to acknowledge care-giving as paid labor and fails to recognize gender and race as fundamental to the organization of all care-giving work, including the work of child care.* (1994, p. 239)

Dominant discourses of class within sociology ignore or underestimate the types of work women do, and the ways their participation in these is structured by their gendered (and sometimes raced) disadvantage (Bergeron, 2012; Bettie, 2000; Charles, 1990; Duffy, 2005, 2007; Glenn, 2010; McDowell, 2008b).

Bettie's (2000) work has been helpful in realising that classed relations are not simply experienced, but also performed. These performances draw upon classed repertoires that are available within people's communities, as well as racialised ones. This is useful for understanding how workers perform particular classed identities at work that may differ from their home lives, and the ways these can shift even within the childcare field, when interacting with differently classed others, such as colleagues, early childhood bureaucrats, or parent-users.

Glenn (2010) has documented extensively, from a US perspective, how gendered work such as childcare has been racialised, performed originally by African-American women, and now increasingly by Latina women. Although the issue of race and ethnicity is not the major focus for this thesis, it is important to keep in mind that similar dynamics are present within the childcare field in Australia. An increasing number of women working in childcare are from migrant or non-dominant culture backgrounds (Meagher & Healy, 2005). The low status of early childhood work within the education field, with its high turnover and the ability to enter without recognised qualifications (apart from female-assigned gender), has made it available to women from a diversity of backgrounds. Many of these workers have forms of cultural capital that are not currently legitimated, such as degrees from their home countries or the ability to speak multiple languages. The experience and skills of these women become part of what shapes the field, and the distinctiveness of what could be called the occupational habitus[7] of worker. Two or three of the workers in this study were in this position, experiencing disadvantage through migration. Others were also migrants, but privileged by coming from Minority-world countries, such as the US, from which their qualifications were recognised. Others are Australian, but as their ethnicity is perceptibly different - through either skin-colour or accent – they are likely to have experienced yet another variant of classed relations.

In drawing attention to race, even where it is not the particular focus of my analysis in this thesis, I acknowledge Warmington's (2009) point that there is no post-racial society yet in existence, and that race continues to inform the perspective of workers, parents and children within the childcare field. Asking interviewees to identify their own cultural background is a form of 'race-bending' (2009, p. 294), allowing each participant to capture the complexity of their own situation, an opportunity which was also taken up by some of those from dominant (white) ethnic backgrounds. Warmington suggests that we must 'recognize some of the limitations of humanistic analyses of race and racism, principally the tendency to replace actual raced, gendered, classed subjects of political practice with a historically abstracted human subject' (Warmington, 2009, p. 290). While a focus on 'working class women' may seem to be acknowledging actual gendered and class subjects, it functions as one of these historical abstractions when it occludes the actual experiences of worker who may diverge, in various ways, from this stereotype.

Deutsch (2007) offers an additional perspective on intersectionality, suggesting that political strategies will differ for women located differently within social space. For dominant class women - already advantaged in terms of cultural and economic capital - their need for change may focus more around issues of individual respect[8] at home and in their workplace. For those, such as childcare workers, with much less economic capital, their need for structural change may be greater.

Bourdieu and classification

Bourdieu has been a key figure in sociology in the last thirty years, particularly within education, articulating a new approach to class analysis through empirical research, such as *Distinction* (1984) or *The State Nobility* (1996), or more theoretical work such as *The Logic of Practice* (1990a) or *The Forms of Capital* (1986). In this thesis I use Bourdieusian language and ideas because his language around social class offers more possibilities for a nuanced analysis of childcare than the traditional dichotomy of proletariat/bourgeousie. For example, although in childcare many workers may come from what most sociologists call 'the working-class', in fact all workers will have complex histories and trajectories through social space. So some of the interviewees of this study, if subject to a classing gaze, might be objectified as 'middle class', as I would have been myself while working in the field. Nonetheless all workers will enter into the particular classed relations of the childcare field, and become subject to those negative valuations regardless of their own location in social space.

Bourdieu himself talks about classification processes extensively, such as the practices involved in academic classification (e.g., 1984, p. 25), but his work on the scholastic point of view (1990b) is particularly relevant. He shows how the academic gaze is necessarily shaped by a distance from necessity that makes it very difficult to understand the practical realities of life, particularly for those on the margins. The scholar's aims necessarily differ from those whom they study, a point made more forcefully by Burawoy (1998). Bourdieu suggests that this distance from necessity makes researchers 'indifferent to the game they study' (1990b, p. 383). This highlights a key difference between most mainstream and feminist research, in that feminists are rarely indifferent to what they study, because they are personally invested in the implications of their research in understanding gendered power relations. The same is true with this project, where my history as a childcare worker has generated a personal investment in the analysis, as well as making me more aware of the ethical implications of my academic work.

Understanding the implications of 'the classing gaze' means that I do not use the language of 'middle class' or 'working class' in this thesis, except when quoting others who use this language. This has been particularly driven home by Sayer's insight into the ways these function as 'euphemisms' (2005, p. 212), that work to disguise the real inequalities that they represent, and to make these more palatable to those whom they classify.

In general I will try and avoid any generic language of classification, drawing instead on the Bourdieusian language of capitals to describe the specific sorts of dis/advantage being discussed at any given time (e.g., lacking in social capital). Where it is necessary to uses particular terms (i.e., for clarity, or to avoid overly-cumbersome alternatives), I will use terms such as 'dominated classes'. These sorts of terms describe classed experiences in ways that signal the power or powerlessness of those being described within that situation or field, rather than functioning as euphemisms.

Bourdieu and the feminist challenge

Although Bourdieu's work remains an important touchstone for this thesis, his theoretical framework struggles to articulate a clear place for gendered inequalities, even when this is the focus, as in *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001). At one point in this book Bourdieu suggests;

> *one would need to enumerate all the cases in which the best-intentioned of men (for symbolic violence does not operate at the level of conscious intentions) perform discriminatory acts, excluding women, without even thinking about it, from positions of authority* (2001, p. 59).

What he does not acknowledge is that his book, presumably well-intentioned, functions as an extended form of symbolic violence, and a comment on his own 'position of authority' at that stage in his career. The book addresses core feminist issues while ignoring decades of feminist scholarship on those issues. For a an extensive critique, see Skeggs (2004b) analysis of Bourdieu's understanding of gender.

Bourdieu's difficulty in engaging meaningfully with gender would ordinarily have made this a less-than-useful framework for a thesis analysing the working lives of women in what is arguably the most feminised occupation in modern Australia. Fortunately, there has been an extensive body of research and philosophical work from a feminist perspective that redevelops the work of Bourdieu (e.g., Dillabough, 2004; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Lovell, 2004; McCall, 1992; McNay, 1999; Moi, 1991; Reay, 2000). These scholars, as committed feminists, are able to engage critically with Bourdieusian theory, and find useful ways to understand how it may apply to women's lived experiences, and their research provides the core knowledge base for this thesis.

Key Bourdieusian concepts

Given my commitment to feminist research, and the gendered nature of the field, my theoretical approach is jointly grounded in feminist and Bourdieusian analyses. Bourdieu (1986) sought to expand class analysis beyond one-dimensional ideas of class location, that focused only on economic inequality, and his articulation of concepts such as capital, field and habitus offer new ways to look at longstanding problems. I will therefore identify the major Bourdieusian concepts used in this thesis, with attention to how these have been reworked by feminist scholars, as well as how I mobilise them in my own analysis.

Capital

One of Bourdieu's primary achievements was the extension of the economic metaphor of capital, showing how this could be used to describe other resources also associated with class phenomena, leading to the formulation of *cultural*, *social* and *symbolic* capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In doing so he opened up new ways of looking at social class, showing how its effects are more than simply financial, and shape relationships between people even beyond the labour market. In exploring the social relationships formed by workers in childcare, and their formal or informal knowledge base, these ideas of capital help articulate important nuances about classed relations that would be impossible using traditional types of class analysis. For example, many of the workers in childcare have little economic capital, and do not generate much more by engaging in this work. Yet this contrasts with their cultural capital, which tends to be greater, as they pursue educational studies in order to further their skills. As women, they often also have significant social and emotional capital, and these are a resource that they invest heavily in, as discussed in Chapter 8.

Symbolic capital is the archetypal form of capital, expressing those particular forms of capital that are valued, are given legitimacy, within a particular culture. Skeggs (1997, 2004a, 2004c) has engaged extensively with the idea of capitals, seeking to understand why the resources that women tend to acquire are so undervalued, and do not tend to function as symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1990a) observes that much sociological analysis falls victim to a narrow 'economism', which cannot see any place for non-economic interests in its analyses. Given this understanding, it is probably not surprising that childcare workers have failed to gain access to significant holdings of economic or symbolic capital because childcare is about privileging practices that are not fundamentally economic, but relational and emotional.

Social space

Part of Bourdieu's conceptual framework is his understanding of social space, which replaces the idea of an economic ladder, or linear status hierarchy. This multi-dimensional space is about attempting to visualise the complexities of how people are located within systems of inequality, according to their volumes and types of capital. As a feminist, however, it is apparent that social space is also structured by other not-immediately economic categories, such as gender and race. So even when men do become part of the childcare field, they struggle to feel at home in this social location or to gain a 'feel for the game' of childcare work (Lovell, 2000).

This social space is difficult to visualise adequately, and indeed Bourdieu illustrates it only through diagrams of two dimensions of this space, economic and social capital (e.g., 1984, pp. 122-123, Fig.125). I suggest that to get an even reasonably accurate understanding of the complexities of the childcare field, it would be necessary to be able to visualise at least an eight-dimensional space, encompassing economic, cultural, social and emotional capitals, as well as the structuring of space through prior schemes of value around gender, race,

sexuality and dis/ability. Given the impossibility of this visualisation task for human brains used only to three dimensions (or four, if time is included), this thesis attempts to unpack these complexities through word and argument.

Conversion and exchange

A critical focus for feminist scholars of Bourdieu has been the exchangeability of the forms of capital that women largely have access to (Colley, 2006; Nowotny, 1981; Skeggs, 2004c). This is of vital interest for this research, as childcare workers are increasingly better educated, and doing work that governments are seeing as significant, and yet their wages remain low compared to comparatively-skilled male workers (Cortis & Meagher, 2012) Understanding how capitals can be converted, and the mechanisms that enable or prevent this, can make clear why some workers experience more difficulties in this process than others. Although this idea is discussed by Bourdieu (e.g., Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), it takes on extra force for feminists, because the capital that women holds tends to be systematically undervalued because of their gender, regardless of how valuable that capital might be when held by men.

This idea is important because it is a reminder that classed relations are dynamic, and always changing, because they are contested by all those with a stake in the game. As Bourdieu frames it, 'the conversion rate between one sort of capital and another is fought over at all times and is therefore subject to endless fluctuations' (1984, p. 243). Even though classed relations are dynamic this does not mean that they are necessarily becoming more equitable. The differing chances of those more privileged or disadvantaged within such systems tend to be maintained, because those with more power (and this includes men's gendered power) have greater ability to ensure that their own capitals are more easily and profitably exchanged.

Field

The concept of a field for Bourdieu relates to a particular locus of power relations. Within a field particular forms of capital are valued, specific rates of exchange exist, and certain manifestations of habitus will develop (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). I consider the occupation of childcare as a field in itself, with a distinct set of values, habitus, power relations, and mix of capitals. McNay's (1999, 2004) theoretical explication of fields has been most influential on my thinking, particularly her understanding that it is the multiple and overlapping nature of fields that allows for different expressions of habitus, and thus a degree of agency. As a result of people moving between different fields, and experiencing differing regimes of value of various forms of capital, they come to understand that the rules of the game in any given field are not absolute. As Bourdieu describes it;

> *players can play to increase or to conserve their capital... but* they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game. (1990a, p. 99; emphasis added)

This is about whether those involved in the struggle accept or reject the assumptions of value within the systems of power they are enmeshed in. I argue in this thesis that workers are struggling to transform the rules of the game, and I show some of the possible ways this might be happening. An important aspect of field is the concept of 'field of power' (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 16), which moves away from the static idea of a dominant class (i.e., the capitalist class). The field of power describes all those with enough access to symbolic power to be able to engage in the struggle over which forms of capital will be legitimised within society. For childcare workers, the field of power tends to constitute the governments, bureaucrats, academics or business groups that are able to contest the meanings and definition of the work, and how it will be valued.

As I use it in this thesis, the childcare field also describes the location in social space of those who make up the childcare workforce. This is a location in social space structured highly by gender (with childcare work overwhelmingly female), and significantly though not exclusively by a lack of educational and economic capital. However as Bourdieu (1984) has shown, occupational categories represent not only particular work practices and wage-levels but also particular classed values and understandings. Each occupation acts as a locus of discourses allowing judgements about the sorts of people likely to do that work, and this seems particularly true for childcare work. Those entering the childcare field – the respondents in this study – therefore become subject to values already defined in the minds of others (and to some extent their own beliefs about those values). This occupational field, rather than merely reflecting their location in social space, actively constrains their ability to accrue and wield valued forms of capital. They become classed by engaging in childcare work.

The value of this field is defined by a particular form of reproductive labour more commonly associated with the private sphere, which involves not just care-giving but also 'menial' labour, such as cleaning, tidying up, serving food, and cleaning up toileting accidents. In talking about the childcare field - in a Bourdieusian rather than a colloquial sense - my intention is to destabilise taken-for-granted notions of childcare work, and turn attention to the social locatedness of workers within the industry. This field is shaped by struggles not just around class and economic issues, but also around status issues, associated with the value of women's work.

Habitus

Although Bourdieu's reworking of previous concepts of habitus (e.g., Bourdieu, 1990a, p. Ch.3) is productive, and has been widely taken up (Reay, 2004b), I have been cautious about how I use this concept in my thesis. One of the fundamental elements of habitus is its taken-for-granted nature, the ability to exist within an environment like a fish in water. While this is certainly true for many workers - in the fit between their gendered and classed habitus and the habitus of childcare work (e.g. Colley, et al., 2003) - it tends to obscure much of the

detail of what happens in everyday life, particularly the possibility of resistance and reflexivity. The complexities of habitus come about because of the overlapping nature of the fields that create it, and are created by it, as noted above.

I argue in this thesis that particular dispositions and skills of worker may function as habitus, but they also, and more importantly, constitute a form of capital. By over-emphasising habitus, and its often 'mechanical' nature in Bourdieu's work, the significance of what childcare workers do and achieve remains invisible within public discourse (Burawoy, 2012). As Bourdieu describes his concept of habitus; 'Necessity imposes a taste for necessity which implies a form of adaptation to and consequently acceptance of the necessary, a resignation to the inevitable' (1984, p. 373). This thesis aims to challenge this 'resignation to the inevitable' by questioning the frequent representation of childcare work as unchallenging ('just babysitting'), and the lives of workers as uninteresting.

I will therefore use habitus only to emphasise the taken-for-granted aspects of childcare work. Like any other groups in society childcare workers frequently normalise the conditions of their existence. At times when it is important to emphasise the reflexivity they engage in about their work, and the possibilities of resistance, then the idea of capital will be used instead. In most cases this will be to talk about *subcultural* capital, which expresses the ways that only some workers in the field commit wholeheartedly to the job, as well as the limited exchange-value of their resources at present.

Distance from necessity

One idea that Bourdieu develops - that of 'distance from necessity' (e.g., 1990b, p. 388) which relates to the ideas about social space already discussed – provides a rich theoretical language to encompass more than simply classed domination. The language of distance from necessity helps capture how various forms of inequality, including gender and race, may combine with classed inequality within individual lives. So for workers in childcare, their work involves an inevitable *proximity* to necessity, where the demands of very young children, and the expectations of workplaces and gender norms, require them to respond to the bumped head, the dirty nappy, or the bruised sense of self.

In Bourdieu's use of this expression, he tries to capture the scheme of values inherent within the field of power. Thus some disciplines (e.g., philosophy), countries (e.g. wealthy countries who can 'off-shore' their messier problems) or groups of people (the dominant classes), have a distance from necessity that is experienced as freedom, as greater agency. Childcare work is intrinsically associated with basic domestic tasks (never-ending, endlessly renewable, and apparently uninteresting) and so lacks the value that comes from having that social and intellectual distance.

Widening the Bourdieusian frame

As can be seen from the above, my theoretical framework is not a classic Bourdieusian one, given my reservations about some aspects of his work. Below I detail some of the other concepts that shape my overall theoretical framework, showing how these make an important contribution to my ability to analyse the complexity of childcare work. These concepts are about grounding the often abstract theory of class analysis in the messy realities of daily life, and certainly about acknowledging the importance of gender within these classed experiences.

Many critiques of class research come from feminists, such as Lareau (2000, 2003) and Gillies (2005, 2006, 2007), whose concern is to represent the perspectives of their marginalised research participants fairly and honestly. This attention to the lived practices of class inevitable calls the neatness of various sociological theories into questions, as the complexities of personal biographies often defy neat labels, or convenient classification. Charles (1990) draws attention to this phenomenon in regard to stratification work, which assumes that (heterosexual) families all share a particular class experience. In reality, women and children in those families may experience different (and even different from each other's) material benefits from the men in those families. In examining the lived practices of class and gender in this research, my aim is not to collapse the complexities of these into a single phenomenon, but to show the ways that a similar location in social space, such as childcare work, will generate not just one response, but particular clusters of responses. These responses are attempts by workers to feel a sense of value despite the construction of childcare as of little worth, and will draw on their own particular life histories, both outside and within childcare.

<u>The labours of women</u>

Although the issue of class is a vital one, it cannot be understood in isolation from gender. Women, through the inequalities they face within male-dominated societies, necessarily experience their relationship to the labour market and to social class very differently than do men. Whether it is the persistent gender gap in wages (e.g., England, Allison, & Wu, 2007), women's perceived responsibility for domestic work (e.g., T. Warren, 2011), or the difficulties of classifying 'women's work' using the traditional manual/mental dichotomy (e.g., Duffy, 2005), women are rarely in the same class as men, metaphorically or practically speaking. Nonetheless, much of the early women's movement[9] ignored how the experience of gender in itself played out differently for women with divergent class or cultural backgrounds.

Where you work and what you do matters, because it shapes your life outcomes, and how others treat you. Judgements about work are always gendered, so that many jobs become known as 'women's' or 'men's' work. Huppatz and Goodwin (2013) discuss the gender segregation of occupations in Australia, and how in many cases this segregation is

increasing rather than diminishing. This phenomenon has been widely discussed by feminist researchers (e.g, Hartmann, 1976), including the acknowledgment that childcare work is one of the most highly segregated occupations (Bergmann, 2005, pp. 219-230). The broad gender divide in occupations is often exacerbated further at a workplace level, with additional gender segregation within specific roles in particular occupational categories[10]. Reskin (1988) argues that such segregation, both within and between occupations, is a strategy on the part of the dominant (in this case, men) to enable continued wage advances while maintaining the illusion of equal pay for equal work.

Those taking up childcare work – the respondents in this study – are taking up a discursive location that is defined by its dual association with the categories of women (by gender), and of those lacking capital (by class). One of my concerns with previous work around childcare is the classification of workers as 'working class' women doing a 'working class' job. This tends to obscure the differences between workers, making invisible both the few men, as well as those women who come from more divergent locations within social space. It also obscures the movements that occur within social space, both for individuals, and for occupational categories themselves. For example, Drudy (2008) shows how primary teaching, once a field mostly staffed by men, began to employ more women until it reached a point where so many women worked in the field that it became symbolically 'women's work' and men began actively to avoid it. So the *occupation* of 'primary teacher' has become devalued discursively over time, not just teachers themselves, providing less access to symbolic capital. It has changed its meaning as an occupational category for those in different generations, and now occupies a different location in social space from its earlier more privileged space.

Key feminist concepts

In exploring the nature and distinctiveness of women's work, feminist scholars have built up a distinctive conceptual framework, with a variety of key terms and ideas. In this section I draw attention to some of the most important for this thesis, such as intensive mothering, or the idea of naturalisation. Although many of these developed out of different concerns from those of Bourdieu, I will show how I take them up within that framework.

Reproduction

One of the difficulties with this term is that it means different things within a Bourdieusian framework than a feminist one. One of Bourdieu's most significant arguments is that systems of power and privilege tend to perpetuate themselves across time (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), which he describes as the reproduction of classed hierarchies. This has been influential within the sociology of education, and taken up by critical educationalists to show the ways that schools tend to perpetuate the existing racial, classed and gendered hierarchies within society (e.g., Anyon, 2006). Others have been critical of it for failing to see

the ways in which such reproduction is always patchy and contested (Connell, et al., 1982; were an influential example of this within the Australian context).

However in this thesis, I use this term in the feminist sense, to talk about the distinction between production and reproduction, in terms of labour. Feminists have argued that domestic labour is a fundamental part of society because it functions to reproduce labour power (Arat-Koc, 2001; Delphy & Leonard, 1992; McMahon, 1999). They point to the dichotomy created between production, which happens in the labour market, and reproduction, which happens in the home, and how too often this dichotomy creates the sense of women's work and domestic labour as *un*productive, because these remain unpaid and largely invisible (McMahon, 1999). It is this second definition of reproduction that is more prominent in this thesis, because childcare work is so closely linked with reproductive labours that occur in the home and elsewhere.

Public/private split

This dichotomy between production and reproduction is closely related to the feminist analyses of the public and private sphere (Bowman & Cole, 2009; Bubeck, 1995; Nowotny, 1981; Reskin, 1988; M. Wright, 2006). This has proved particularly relevant in this thesis in exploring the idea of emotional capital, and draws on some of Nowotny's (1981) early insights about this dichotomy. The association of women with emotion has been longstanding, and works at a number of levels, coercing women into caring roles more generally (Bubeck, 1995), but also impacting on their role as wives and mothers (Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Maushart, 2001; T. Miller, 2011). This association with (private) emotion has also been used to devalue women as (public) intellectual equals within academic pursuits (Sayer, 2005), and contributes to their assumed lack of value within society (Skeggs, 2004a). In my own research this divide largely breaks down. On the one hand long day care work apparently happens in the public sphere, given its institutional setting and paidwork status. On the other hand it is so closely associated with devalued forms of 'women's work' (mothering and housework) that it becomes a de facto part of the private sphere, and operates according to a relational familial logic, rather than an impersonal economic one (Ailwood, 2008; Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Grace, 1998; O'Connell, 2010; Osgood, 2012).

Discourse

The idea of discourse popularised by Foucault (1980) does a better job of capturing the subtleties of some relationships of power than does habitus, and at times in this thesis I draw upon this poststructuralist concept. The idea of discourse acknowledges that people often have a personal investment in, and gain pleasure out of, particular ways of being, even when these might involve their own domination. This is a much more resonant, and parsimonious, explanation of women's investment in emotional and caring labour than the often-mechanistic concept of habitus (Burawoy, 2012). In fact, there are times when Bourdieu

himself uses language very similar to the idea of discourse, in looking at the complexities of how people negotiate their social worlds (e.g., Bourdieu et al., 1999, p. 3). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (e.g., 1974) relies on shared understandings within society about what is valued and what is not, yet his theories do not explore how such meanings are propagated or diffused. Discourse fills this gap, providing a theory of particular knowledges and attitudes being valued and promoted by those with the power to do so.

The discourse of intensive mothering expectations (Hays, 1996; Vincent, 2010; Vincent, Ball, & Pietikainen, 2004; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989) is a particularly apt example. This discourse circulates through media representations, 'expert' opinion, and colloquial understandings, and acts widely as a controlling force on women (Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Wood & Skeggs, 2008; Yeo, 2005). It crosses class boundaries, producing expectations of all women, with varying impacts dependent on their particular location in social space (Hays, 1996). Calling it a habitus of mothering would suggest a resignation to this role, rather than what is often active coercion. This coercion occurs via the threat of being called a 'bad mother' by relatives or associates, or through experiencing the negative judgement of maternal and child health nurses, social workers, or teachers (Lawler, 2000; Longhurst, 2008; Skeggs, 1997; Steedman, 1986).

Intensive mothering expectations

Hays' (1996) book on intensive mothering raises awareness about the changing expectations of motherhood in recent decades. She argues that although mothering has always been something women have been expected to be able to do, in more recent years the expectations about what it should involve have increased dramatically. Women are now expected to be expert carers and professional mothers (Vincent, 2010), fostering their child's uniqueness, rather than simply meeting children's basic needs. Hays' (1996) arguments resonate with Lareau's (2003) findings about the classed cultures of child-rearing. Lareau (2003) shows how this plays out across the social field, with women from more disadvantaged locations in social space being expected to emulate the mothering practices of more privileged women. These maternalisms have become a powerful discourse, provoking guilt in women who work and use childcare, and anxiety about their child-rearing abilities in mothers who 'choose' to stay home and look after their children (Bowman & Cole, 2009; Lawler, 2000; Reay, 2004a; Skeggs, 1997). This has raised questions among feminists about its function as a powerful backlash against the gains made by women (Galman & Mallozzi, 2012; O'Brien Hallstein, 2008; van Egmond, et al., 2010). The discourse of intensive mothering distorts the ongoing struggles of the social field around gender, impacting on women's influence within the field of power. These ideas are important for this thesis because childcare work is very closely aligned with the work of mothering, and so becomes enmeshed in these discursive power struggles over the value of child-rearing and emotional labour.

Naturalisation and normalisation

These two concepts often belong together, describing the ways in which certain associations and behaviours become taken-for-granted, or normalised (Bergmann, 2005; Bown, Sumsion, & Press, 2011; Osgood, 2012; Skeggs, 2004a; Urwin, 1985). In the case of gender the dichotomous expectations for women and men are presumed to rest on embodied (biologically- or genetically-based) affinities, and so are the result of 'nature'. In this way any related inequalities based on gender are easier to ignore, because these are naturalised and assumed to be inevitable. It is this ignoring, this taken-for-grantedness, that is the process of normalisation. So, for example, the very high proportion of women in the low-paid work of childcare is highly normalised, with men's attempts to do it tending to provoke surprise or opposition (Cameron, 2006; Sargent, 2005).

These processes of normalisation are particularly true for the types of menial work associated with dominated-class women, as Skeggs (1997, 2004a) has demonstrated. This is significant in the childcare realm because such work, whether done in the public or private sphere, is tightly associated with women, and seen as exclusively their responsibility (Murray, 1998). As Ailwood (2008) observes, this naturalisation of childcare functions to undermine worker's ability to improve the status of their work.

Ideas of normalisation can be just as significant in terms of classed inequalities. Researchers like Glenn (2010) and Duffy (2007) have shown how particular low-status groups become associated with menial labour in particular societies, and this can become taken-for-granted both by those doing the labour, and those who benefit from it. Ideas of both habitus and discourse are at work within this process. Those in low-valued jobs become shaped by the low-expectations of those who 'normally' do such work, ending up embodying that work sometimes quite literally, through posture, gesture and so on (Skeggs, 2001). In addition, both the dominated-classes themselves, and the menial jobs that are assumed to be all they can do, are both discursively constructed within society to make such things feel inevitable (McDowell, 2008a).

Inequality comes to be naturalised and seen as the result of people's own level of ability, while the effects of power and the control over the forms of capital remain hidden, and so do not become the subject of political mobilisation. Bottero (2004) explores some of the reasons for this, showing that our tendency to associate within a particular and narrow zone of social space often prevents people from correctly appraising their own privilege or disadvantage. However contestation of these ideas is possible, particular through understanding that appeals to what is natural themselves misrepresent the natural world, which is far from unchangeable (Sayer, 2011b). Perhaps what is needed is a new paradigm about nature (for example; A. Taylor, 2013; A. Taylor & Blaise, 2014), that sees it as mutable rather than fixed, undermining its discursive role in the 'fixing' of inequalities.

Emotional significance of inequality

In the literature review I showed how emotions are increasingly becoming a significant focus of research in sociology. Moreover, within the childcare field emotions are of great significance in the lives of workers, guiding their responses to the children's behaviour, their treatment by parents, and the inequities of the field. In this section I show how I take up these issues theoretically, guided by materialist feminist scholarship.

Emotional labour

Hochschild (1979, 1983, 1998, 2002, 2003; 2000) developed the concept of emotional labour, and her work continues to contribute to understandings of the role of emotions within the workplace, as well as how these play out within classed relations (Steinberg & Figart, 1999). Hochschild (1983) outlines the ways in which emotions are chosen and displayed for particular purposes by workers, in order to achieve workplace goals. Certainly childcare workers in this research performed emotional labour of a variety of sorts on a daily basis, and talked about it extensively in their interviews.

The concept of emotional labour is a powerful one, and it has expanded upon in ways that have informed my theoretical understanding of childcare work. For example, Bolton and Boyd (2003) develop Hochschild's concept further to show the very different types of emotional labour that are possible within workplaces. Although I do not use their typology directly, this helped me understand the nuances of emotional labour in childcare, and the differences between the emotion work done in guiding children, or in responding to difficult parents. One aspect of Bolton and Boyd's (2003) work that is especially valuable is the recognition that overly simplistic usages of emotional labour may conceal the potential for creative resistance among those being forced to do such labour. Expanding thoughtful on this relationship between emotional labour and resistance, Baines (2011) shows how in the carework field there is often a tension between what workers want to feel and what they are told to feel as employees, and this becomes particularly challenging when these feelings are related to personal moral commitments. This helped shape my understanding of childcare workers' attempts to display a 'detached professional' demeanour in their jobs, while being emotionally alive to the issues and concerns of those with whom they were working. This sort of intimate emotional engagement by workers has been contested by those who argue that paid emotional work is *necessarily* different from unpaid emotional work (e.g., Lynch, 2007), reflecting the anxieties about the relationship between money and care for children seen in the literature review (Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Yeo, 2005). My research actively rejects such a dichotomy, using poststructural concepts of multiple identities (Walkerdine, 1986) to see instead the complex intertwining of personal and workplace selves that is often revealed in the emotional work spoken about by interviewees.

One of the many difficult issues with the idea of emotional labour is that for those in caring professions it is often bound up with their own altruistic commitment to the work, and thus its demands are harder to resist. As Dyer and her colleagues (2008) observe, the nurses in their study only felt able to complain about the manual labour they were asked to do, not the emotional labour, because to complain about the latter would be to undermine their own investment in a caring self. This dilemma is always present for workers in childcare, even though they acknowledge that it is often the emotional work they do that leaves them most exhausted.

Emotional capital

Dilemmas such as these can be better understood by placing this emotional labour in a Bourdieusian framework, as I do in this thesis through the concept of emotional capital. My analysis builds upon important conceptual work by Reay (2000, 2004a, 2005) who draws together the various disparate uses of the emotional capital concept (e.g., Allatt, 1993; Illouz, 1997; Nowotny, 1981), and shows how important an idea this can be in the field of education. This makes a fundamental contribution to my theoretical framework because the idea of emotional capital explains much about the intersection of classed and gendered work, as Gillies (2006, 2007) illustrates. I understand emotional capital as an embodied form of capital, like many forms of cultural capital, that is acquired through the practices of emotional labour, and which functions as a resource for workers in managing their own and others' emotions.

One of these ways that I take this up is to show the difference between alienated emotional capital, drawing on ideas from Jónasdóttir (1988), and ethically-reflexive emotional capital. This is a significant and productive distinction because it reveals how significant amounts of emotional work accrue as capital for others, where the benefits of this work become alienated from those who do the work. This can be true for mothers investing in their children's emotional wellbeing (Hutchison, 2012; O'Brien, 2008) or for concepts of professionalism that see this emotional work as being all about the needs of 'clients' and never about workers' own wellbeing (Douglass & Gittell, 2012).

In contrast, a focus on the benefits of ethical reflexivity for workers makes it possible to see emotional capital being accrued by workers, through managing their emotions thoughtfully and strategically. This form of emotional capital comes through most clearly in work by Colley (2006), who recognises the possible alienation of emotional capital while also acknowledging its advantages to workers over the longer term.

Emotional capital or gender capital?

Given the historic association of women with emotions, using the concept of emotional capital carries with it a risk of essentialising this as a resource only available to women, as seen earlier in the discussion on naturalisation. I take up the notion of emotional capital as a

way to denaturalise the emotional skills that are required of women throughout their lives, and show how these should be able to function as a resource with significant exchange value for anyone. Nonetheless, the expectation that those on the margins - both women and those with less economic and cultural capital - will do most of the emotional work in society means that these dominated groups will have some advantage in accumulating emotional capital, a point made by Manion (2007). Husso and Hirvonen (2012) carefully demonstrate how this preferential acquirement of emotional skills occurs for women in childcare work. However this advantage will only be of material or cultural benefit if and when such capital can be legitimated, and so function as symbolic capital, as issue I examine further within the thesis.

As a Bourdieusian and a feminist[11] researcher, I have struggled to know how to engage with the wide variety of literature that explores the idea of femaleness or femininity as a form of capital (Huppatz, 2009; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2011; Lovell, 2004; McCall, 1992; Moi, 1991; Skeggs, 1997). This represents an attempt to understand how the gendered and classed self is located in what Skeggs calls the 'prior historical classificatory schemes of value' (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 75). I do not underestimate the difficulties of this issue, and both Moi (1991) and McCall (1992) both acknowledge the ways that power relations limit women's ability to legitimate their holdings of capital. In this thesis I have not taken up the idea of gendered capitals, out of a concern that to do so reifies the already strong discursive link between women, emotion and caring labour. Although there is an acknowledgement that men may be able to acquire feminine capital (e.g., Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013, p. 297) - though perhaps not female capital - it is clear from research on this issue that many respondents themselves naturalise the links between these skills and particular gendered embodiments and histories. My own position is that this is unlikely to be productive in terms of breaking down gendered binaries in the field of carework. In contrast, the idea of emotional capital, which captures concepts such as emotional insight, resilience and awareness, offers the possibility for a much wider take-up of such skills. This is likely to produce a greater valuing of 'women's work' more generally, not just because of its historical devaluation, but because of the complex and currently overlooked skills that such work produces.

Moral significance of inequalities

The sociological significance of emotions has been important for my theoretical understanding of the childcare field. In a similar way it has proved necessary to understand the place of a moral and ethical orientation for workers in understanding the nature of their work in childcare. Such an orientation helps them to know the value of their work in the broadest sense, even in situations where they may feel unvalued in terms of the economic or cultural rewards they can get from their work. There are two ways in which an awareness of ethical issues has become incorporated into my theoretical framework. One is at a macro level, in putting my understanding of the inequalities experienced by childcare workers into a broader global and sociological framework. The other is at a micro level, in understanding

how moral reflexivity is a critical element in understanding the lived experiences of work in the childcare field.

Distribution, recognition, and global childcare

At what could be called the macro level of analysis, there is increasing recognition among sociologists that moral and ethical issues cannot be excluded from our research frame, not just at a methodological level, but in terms of analysis and findings (Fraser, 2007; Lister, 2007; Lovell, 2007; Meo, 2011; Nussbaum, 2010; Sayer, 2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2012; E. O. Wright, 2013). Indeed, as Wickramasinghe (2010) acknowledges, this has been one of the strengths of feminist research. This involves the acknowledgement that inequalities of class and gender involve not just the abstraction of power relations or the differing of volumes of capital, but actual flourishing and suffering by groups of people (Fraser, 2007; Sayer, 2011b; E. O. Wright, 2013). The acknowledgement that sociological research can illuminate such suffering means acknowledging that justice is better served by some responses to research findings than others. Part of my argument over the whole thesis, is that the undervaluing of childcare work, materially and culturally, undermines any possibility of flourishing for childcare workers and denies them 'equal access to the necessary means to participate meaningfully' (E. O. Wright, 2013, p. 5) in Australian society. Looking at this macro-level, it is clear that workers caring for children in all sorts of situations across the globe experience a similar devaluation and invisibility in their work (e.g., Ayalon, 2009; Constable, 2007; Staab & Maher, 2006; Zarembka, 2002).

In trying to unpack the intertwining of discursively-based devaluation of childcare work, with the material effects of low-paid menial and women's work, I have found Fraser's (1989, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2007; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) work particularly useful. The framework of inequality she has been articulating and refining offers a philosophy of justice that does not privilege either the economic or the cultural. Fraser suggests that;

> *A genuinely critical perspective, in contrast, cannot take the appearance of separate spheres at face value. Rather, it must probe beneath appearances to reveal the hidden connections between distribution and recognition. It must make visible, and criticizable, both the cultural subtexts of nominally economic processes and the economic subtexts of nominally cultural practices.* (1999, p. 45)

It is this work, of making the various forms of inequality experienced by child carers visible and criticizable, that I have undertaken in this thesis. Breaking down the distribution/recognition distinction has frequently been a feminist concern (e.g., Delphy & Leonard, 1992), because this divide has been used to undermine claims for equal treatment by women. This denies their frequent interconnection, such as when economic inequalities drive a refusal of recognition (e.g. contempt for those doing low-paid caring jobs), or when discursive inequalities are used to justify material ones (e.g. lower pay for women, through the presumption that they are not 'breadwinners').

Fraser (2001) develops the notion of 'participatory parity' to link these two spheres, showing how all claims for justice can be understood as claims for equal participation. Interestingly, this has lead her to understanding that there is a third dimension to claims for justice – a political one - that is becoming more prominent in a globalising and interconnected world. This political dimension asks which groups of people in any situation are considered as possible equal participants (Fraser, 2007). This political question, when combined with the cultural and economic issues, allows her theory to address complex global issues, such as neo-colonialism, environmental responsibilities, indigenous rights, and statelessness. So for example, in Hong Kong, most childcare is provided by foreign domestic workers, who are legally able to be paid less than half the Hong Kong minimum wage (Hong Kong Immigration Department, 2013). The low-value of their work affects the racism they experience culturally, as well as defining their exploitation as workers, for whom this minimum wage may be earned for anywhere from eight hours work a day to eighteen (Constable, 2002, 2007, 2009; Cortes & Pan, forthcoming; French, 1986; Knowles & Harper, 2009; Mok, 2008; Yelland, Andrew, Blaise, & Chan, 2013). I return to this last idea in my concluding chapter, as I touch on the global connections within the childcare field. Fraser's work provides a context for my own understanding of childcare work as ethical work, and the acknowledgement that many workers view their work in this way.

Reason, emotion and reflexivity

At the opposite end of the scale, from the global to the personal, I have needed to take account of the moral significance to workers of the job that they do with children. An orthodox Bourdieusian framework might suggest that childcare workers did their job out of a feel for the game of childcare, arising from some form of gendered and classed habitus. However it was apparent that respondents had a much more critical and reflective understanding of the work that they did, which they were good at, but also wary about.

In trying to understand the complexities of these issues for workers I was aided significantly with the critical insights made by Sayer (2005, 2011b). Contesting the privileging of reason within academic thought, he suggests that 'emotions are not to be counterposed to reason but are evaluative judgements about circumstances beyond people's control which are likely to affect their well-being and their commitments' (Sayer, 2005, p. 133). In naming emotions as evaluative judgements he brings them out of psychology and into the terrain of sociology, enabling questions such as how they are shaped by people's circumstances and so influence the decisions they make in their work and home lives. Emotions may function in some ways like Bourdieu's habitus, as Sayer (2005, p. 37) observes, being laid down as dispositions over time, but they always retaining a cognitive and reflexive element that distinguishes them from the unconsciousness of habitus. This reflexivity, I suggest, is why emotions can be seen to function more as capital than habitus, and can be consciously worked upon and invested in (McNay, 2004). This has driven the importance of the idea of emotional capital in my

theoretical framework. Sayer's (2005) concept of everyday, or 'lay' reflexivity - the ability of all to respond consciously to the conditions of their existence – has been critical in showing how workers contest the naturalisation of their own work as classed and gendered subjects. Lay reflexivity acknowledges that all social actors, even the most marginalised, exercise some level of introspection about their condition within society. This introspection is not limited to the intellectual processes of scholarly reflexivity but involves practical wisdom (Sayer, 2011b), and the complex evaluative responses of emotion (Sayer, 2005). For Sayer (2007, 2011b) such lay reflexivity is a fundamental part of people's ethical responses to situations, and their moral understanding of society, however imperfect. This idea of lay reflexivity is an important concept in my work, suggesting the shift from a habitus of childcare to the more conscious attention paid by workers to the power relations of the field, and their willingness to choose particular practices over others, in conscious and ethical ways.

Scholarship around the moral significance of inequalities has been most valuable in unsettling my own taken-for-granted assumptions as a researcher. Researchers such as Fraser (e.g., 2001) and Sayer (e.g., 2011b) draw on philosophical insights to challenge long-standing dichotomies in the social sciences. These dichotomies include: the assumed distinction between reason/rationality and emotion/irrationality; the division of inequalities into ones either of distribution (economic) or of recognition (cultural); and the long-standing sociological divide regarding status and social class. My theoretical framework has been broadened and deepened through such insights, enabling the conceptual work I have done in this thesis.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter presents the key theoretical arguments that guide this thesis. Taking a materialist feminist perspective, and building on the work done by feminist Bourdieusian scholars, I use the language of capital, field and social space to understand the lived practices of childcare workers. However my commitment to feminist research causes me to take a critical step back from some of the techniques of power, such as classification, employed by some sociological researchers, asking how and whether those who are being researched may think differently about their social relations. This involves an understanding of all the ways that classed and gendered inequalities are manifested, whether materially or discursively.

Given the focus of this thesis on childcare, a highly feminised field, and one that epitomises 'women's work', my theoretical framework also draws upon the important theoretical work around the value of labour, and the nature of emotion work. I mobilise a number of concepts from feminist scholarship to explore the lives of childcare worker, including notions of reproductive labour, maternalisms, discourse, the public-private dichotomy, and processes of naturalisation. Many of these are long-established concepts within feminist scholarship, and

are noted here to acknowledge the importance of such work in providing a foundation for this research.

The next chapter outlines the methodology used in this study, and looks more closely at the ethical and practical issues of this research project, in ways that resonate with the moral significance of research outlined here. It outlines the research sites, profiles the participants, and shows the methods I used to gather and analyse my data. My methodological approach picks up on the feminist analysis undertaken in the literature review, and is reflective of the ethical and activist stance that underpins my theoretical framework.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explores how the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter guided the methodological decisions made in the project. As Bourdieu has observed, in his reflections on the 'sociology of sociology', it is not that 'theoretic knowledge is worth nothing but that we must know its limits.... theoretical knowledge owes a number of its most essential properties to the fact that the conditions under which it is produced are not that of practice' (1992, p. 70). This chapter explains the conditions under which this research was produced, to allow an accurate assessment of the claims being made in later chapters.

I begin by explaining my methodological approach, and the ways this is informed by my theoretical framework. I then move on to discuss the methods and processes that I went through in conducting this research, such as recruiting participants, conducting interviews, and analysing the data. Next I examine some of the important ethical questions around the research, and how power-relations of various sorts have shaped the collection and interpretation of the research material. I conclude by examining the strengths and possible weaknesses of this project, and the ways I responded to these in refining my research processes.

Methodological approach

All research is a process of decision-making. With qualitative research, these are not decisions made upfront, and then implemented seamlessly. Rather, research has been likened to a 'craft' process, where skills are learnt over time, and applied, but always need to be adapted to the particular materials and situations in the present (Burawoy, 1998). This thesis is positioned within the field of sociology of education, in the emerging field of the sociology of early childhood. Working in this emerging field has involved finding the best tools to examine the issues at play within the field, and this has meant looking beyond the field of education to other areas, such as carework or the sociology of mothering, which are also highly relevant to my inquiry. As detailed in the theoretical framework and literature review, my allegiances are to post-positivist, qualitative research, framed within the feminist political project, and utilising the conceptual language of Bourdieu. I revisit these in this chapter to show how they impact on my methodological decision-making.

The most obvious aspect of my research identity is a commitment to post-positivist research. Such an allegiance acknowledges that both the 'self' of the researcher, as well as the 'other' of research participants, are constructed through discourse, through our everyday talk and mental processes, as well as any writing and reflection that emerges from that (Griffith &

Smith, 2005). It is these discourses that must be actively negotiated during the research process. This involves holding in mind both my own reaction as a researcher to my researcher participants, as well as to what I can gauge of their own reactions to me. There is often a fundamental 'mistrust' at the heart of any research relationship, involving decisions about likeability, about silence and deception, and involving always some process of consent (Yu, 2011). My interest in post-positivist approaches developed from my own resistance to the dominance of a highly positivist child development tradition within the childcare field (Burman, 1994).

Another insight from post-positivist research is that 'objectivity' is not only a fiction but also an act of power. Claiming 'objectivity' as a researcher, in comparison to the 'subjectivity' of those being researched, is to assert a power of superior knowledge simply because the researcher is the one who writes their version of events (Warr, 2004; Yosso, 2005; Yu, 2011). By acknowledging objectivity as a fiction, as an assumption built into traditional ideas of research, I can strive instead for a cautious awareness of my own biases that allows me to be skeptical of the things I appear to be seeing or hearing[12]. In doing so I may be more likely to be able to identify those unexpected aspects of the research – aspects that might be more meaningful than the original assumptions built into the research questions.

A commitment to feminism builds on an allegiance to post-positivist points of views, as many feminists have been instrumental in developing methodologies more attuned to the embodied and discursive nature of research. Kenway and McLeod (2004) suggest that feminist sociologists of education must pay attention to 'the effect of our own presence on the perspectives we are offered by the various participants, and our own attachment to and construction of particular perspectives and truths' (2004, p. 541). Though an *acknowledged* feminist commitment is often questioned in those who are not female, I share Lovell's view that feminism constitutes a set of practices in the Bourdieusian sense, which require 'considerable 'investments' of the self, of social, and cultural capital' (2000, p. 26). Both my teaching career and my work as a researcher have involved ongoing investment in feminist practices, not simply a knowledge of certain ideas. A feminist approach constitutes a necessary ontological commitment, I believe, in any engagement in a field like childcare that is inextricably associated with 'the female' (Wickramasinghe, 2010). Such a commitment fundamentally acknowledges diversity and difference, seeing these as things to be acknowledged rather than ignored. This diversity must be negotiated, understood, and built on as part of a commitment to decolonising the world of academic knowledge production (Mohanty, 2003).

I have already acknowledged extensively my use of concepts developed by Bourdieu (see, for example; 1984, 1988, 1990a). His understanding of the practical and visceral experience of class processes, and the conceptual tools he developed (such as the forms of capital) to analyse the field of power, make his work valuable to this study. However his

acknowledgement of feminist contributions to sociological endeavour was minimal, and his own work in regard to gender seemed unable to acknowledge his own gendered position of power (Bourdieu, 2001). My engagement with his ideas has been made easier by the contributions of feminist scholars who have critically examined and moved beyond some of these limitations (most notably; Moi, 1991; Reay, 2000, 2004a; Skeggs, 1997, 2004b, 2004c). More specifically, Bourdieu has a different relationship with (social) scientific 'truth' (see particularly 1992, p. 49), that differs from post-positivist understandings about the contested nature of truth claims (Foucault, 1980; Walkerdine, 2003).

Methods and processes

This is a multi-site interview study of twenty-three women working in long-day childcare services in Melbourne, a city of approximately four million people, situated on the south-east coast of Australia (City of Melbourne, 2012). This section outlines the recruitment process, first of the services that would be involved, and then of individuals within those services. I then look at the processes of data collection, from conducting interviews, to transcribing, and then analysing the data.

Ethics review process

In seeking to collect data about childcare work practices, I needed to convince two ethics review boards – the University, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood - of the probity of my research design. This involved some modifying of my aims for the research. I initially wanted to conduct ethnographic-style research within those services, but the Education department review board made such an option almost impossible. In the end, although it limited the types of data I could gather, I realised that interviews could be as meaningful a source of information (Smith, 2005), and they may in the end have provided me with more useful data. Maynard discusses these 'external constraints' on research and observes that they are rarely discussed but that it is necessary to acknowledge that 'such facts intrude into and colour the research undertaken' (2008, p. 83). While I believe the research findings might have been different with a different mix of data, this thesis constitutes the research that has been possible, given these constraints.

One of the misunderstandings I had at this early stage in the research was the assumption that most childcare workers would not feel able to participate in the research, due to the demanding nature of childcare work. As a result I argued with the ethics committee to be able to thank workers for their participation with a gift certificate, even though such 'thanks' may at times be construed as a form of coercion. As it turns out, when it came time to thank those whom I had interviewed, most protested about the thank-you gift, and refused to take it, insisting that they wanted to do this as an altruistic act and as part of their commitment to the field.

Recruitment

In recruiting both services and individuals within them to this research project I had to be aware of the self-selection that is inevitable in a study of this type. The commitment I was asking was not trivial, and ethical practice demands that participation be voluntary. In both cases, with services and participants, it seems likely that there would have been some self-selection in terms of those participating, and this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Research participation is often framed around the issue of consent. This is usually treated as something that must be sorted out only at the beginning, and is usually reduced to the banality of 'a signature on a form'. As many researchers have noted, this is an impoverished notion of consent, as well as a way of keeping power in the hands of researchers (Babbie, 2010; Coady, 2010; Konza, 2005; Lareau, 2000; Richards & Schwarz, 2002). Lareau (2000) notes about one of her research projects that the only research participant who actually read the consent form was a lawyer, whose training presumably made them cautious about signing anything unread (2000, pp. 230, n.235). This was a reminder not to take for granted any participant's understanding of what they were giving permission for, at any stage of the research process. It seems more useful to view consent as a dialogic process (Urban, 2010). It is the product of an ongoing dialogue between participants and researcher on how that material should be used, and the meanings that are made of it (Richards & Schwarz, 2002). Konza (2005) elaborates this position further, arguing that even during an interview the researcher should be checking in with that interviewee, making sure that they are happy to continue talking. These insights about consent are especially important when researching in childcare, where some of the participants may have had very little experience with academic practices (Coady, 2010).

Research sites

Respondents were drawn from six centres out of a total of just under 1200 services across metropolitan Melbourne (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). These were chosen to maximise the diversity of views, with two centres located in each of low-, median-, and high-income neighbourhoods, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics[13](2006). Neighbourhoods were categorised by household income into low-, median- or high-income, though given the averaging effect of postcode-level data, 90% of areas fall within the median-income category. Services ranged in size from a small two room, 35 place centre, to a much larger nine room, 140 place centre.

This clearly does not attempt to achieve a representative sample. Rather, it is an attempt to explore the range of issues present for workers across a broad range of services, consistent with the exploratory nature of the study. Choosing two centres within each income group allows for some basic comparison to see if particular issues were present for areas of similar economic advantage or disadvantage. This selection process was further assisted by the researcher's own knowledge of the cultural and class dynamics of the city. The areas where

centres were located were chosen based initially on household income, but also on knowledge of the historical legacy of an area. So while some new urban fringe suburbs may fall within the low-income bracket, these are areas in transition. All services were located in areas where their relative advantage or disadvantage has been present over an extended period. In addition to income, an attempt was made to use services with a wide geographical spread as well. While this was possible with both the low- and median-income areas, the limited geographical spread of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city, as well as the constraints of those willing to be involved, meant that the two services categorised as high-income were located fairly close to each other.

Although I had initially believed that private for-profit services would be unwilling to be involved, in the end, three of the six services were for-profit, two were not-for-profit community-based services, and the remaining service was run by a local government. These figures are broadly representative of the service profiles across the industry (Brennan, et al., 2009, p. 8). There will be some shifting in this ratio of services since this time, especially given the collapse of ABC Learning (Australia's largest corporate childcare chain) in 2008, and the subsequent takeover of 570 of their least profitable services by a government-sponsored alliance of non-for-profit agencies (Australian Services Union, 2009; Ellis, 2011).

If my prior assumptions about the classed identities of childcare workers were correct, then the location of centres will make little difference to the occupational or familial habitus of participants. However, the geographical and economic differences between different communities will mean that different classed relations are experienced within these services, given different groups of parent users. Manicom (1995) shows in relation to schools how such classed effects often overlap and reinforce each other. In fact, many of the respondents commented spontaneously on the characteristics of the parent users of their services, whether because these were affluent and highly educated, or distinctly disadvantaged.

The last point that needs to be made about the involvement of services is the possible effects of access to the service, and the personal relationships that can flow from this. My research design called for an initial visit to the service (not in the classrooms, but in the staff room). This was timed to coincide with staff breaks, as a way to introduce myself, build a connection with possible interviewees, and answer questions about the research. However this level of access was only allowed by three of the six services. This may have some impact on my data, as the resulting pool of interviewees was skewed by the larger selection of possible respondents from those more accessible centres, as well as the sizes of centres themselves, which varied considerably. Targeting of interviewees from amongst those available enabled me to balance the contributions from the centres, in the overall cohort of interviewees.

Research participants

Research participants were recruited through visits to each service, through; informal conversation in the staff-room (three services), talking briefly at a staff meeting (one service),

and contact just with the coordinator or director (two services). Participants were asked to fill in a short survey (Crozier, 2000), taking approximately five minutes, which asked them for basic biographical details about their age, cultural background, gender and role within the service, and then a few questions about their beliefs about the caregiver-parent relationship, as this was the focus of research in the initial stages.

In this they were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed, which provided a pool of possible interviewees for the research. Using the biographical details obtained from the survey, participants were targeted for interviews so as to maximise the diversity of the interviewees, according to qualification level, age, and ethnicity. In the end, all those who had agreed to being interviewed were given the opportunity for an interview. Many interviews were the result of numerous phone calls and emails. Particular efforts were made to accommodate those interviewees who identified as other than dominant-culture Australian (i.e., 'Anglo', Caucasian etc.), as their views were perceived to be valuable in terms of their potentially-different experiences within the childcare field.

Although I had originally intended for the short qualitative responses in the survey to assist this selection process, this turned out not to be a useful tool, with most responses reflecting taken-for-granted notions of the childcare role. Given that self-selection may have lead to an over-representation of particularly committed workers – including those with most cultural or educational capital - a modification to the research design was made, to allow participants to be sourced from referrals from existing interviewees, specifically seeking workers who had recently left, or were thinking of leaving the field. This modification produced an additional three interviewees, and in total twenty-three workers were able to be interviewed from a total of thirty-one possible interviewees. Table 3.1 (below) shows the interviewees, their basic biographical details and qualification level achieved.

Table 3.1

Pseudonym	Age	Assigned gender	Cultural background (self-described)	Centre profile	Years of work in sector	Qualification (see glossary)
Abbie	20s	Female	Australian	High-income	<5	Diploma
Amber	20s	Female	Caucasian	Personal referral (L)	<5	Diploma
Andrea	30s	Female	Anglo-Australian	Personal referral (M)	5-10	Certificate
Anne	50s	Female	Anglo-Australian	Low-income	20	Diploma
Brittany	20s	Female	Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Diploma
Dianne	40s	Female	Italian-Australian	High-income	5-10	Diploma
Jade	30s	Female	Indian-Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Certificate
Jeni	20s	Female	Sri-Lankan, from Dubai	Middle-income	<5	Degree
Julie	30s	Female	Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Certificate
Kelly	30s	Female	Australian	High-income	<5	Diploma
Lauren	30s	Female	'Melting pot' American	Middle-income	15	Degree
Lea	20s	Female	Malaysian Chinese-Australian	Personal referral (H)	<5	Diploma
Lisa	40s	Female	White British	High-income	5-10	Diploma
Marie	40s	Female	Immigrant white	Middle-income	20	Degree

			Australian			
Mia	40s	Female	Greek	Middle-income	20	Diploma
Mirjeta	60s	Female	Swiss/English/Albanian-Australian	Low-income	40	Diploma
Ondine	30s	Female	Anglo-Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Degree
Rachel	40s	Female	British-Australian	Low-income	20	Degree
Rebecca	30s	Female	Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Degree
Ruby	20s	Female	Zambian/Scottish-Australian	High-income	<5	Certificate
Samantha	30s	Female	Australian	Middle-income	5-10	Diploma
Serene	30s	Female	Chinese	High-income	<5	Certificate
Soek-Teng	30s	Female	Malaysian-Chinese	Middle-income	<5	Certificate

Data collection process

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with workers lasting anywhere from twenty-one minutes to two hours and twenty-one minutes, with an average of fifty-five minutes across all interviews. As Smith (2005) argues, all forms of qualitative data collection are attempts to get at 'the actual'. All of these, whether field notes, interviews, video data, or whatever, are mediated through discourse, which structures our perception of and production of these records of experience. Semi-structured interviews are a common choice within feminist post-positivist research (O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). A structured, and thus inflexible, interview protocol reflects the positivist assumption that treating all interview participants equally in terms of questions produces data with greater validity. Post-positivist researchers reject this assumption as simplistic, noting the impossibility of standardising the complexities of a human interaction such as an interview. Some choose to do unstructured interviews (e.g., life-history research) where an interview protocol might interfere with the richness of the participant's story. For this research, where my aim is to explore particular subjects with workers, there is an advantage to having specific questions prepared in advance, which ensures that each participant is given a chance to respond to all the issues. However 'answers' can vary from incomprehension or refusal, to a lengthy discourse on the subject. A semi-structured interview acknowledges the inevitability of such diversity, allowing for opportunities to reframe questions, ask follow-up questions, and otherwise pursue the desired information in a variety of ways.

These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and analysed as described below. After initial analysis, one focus group was conducted with interview participants to allow them a chance to comment or offer criticism of the findings. This session, which lasted two hours, was also audio-recorded and transcribed, providing an additional source of data. All participants were invited to this session (via multiple emails), and 5 of the 23 interviewees chose to participate. Although called a focus group, as a convenient label to describe it to participants and researchers, this discussion was intended mainly as form of respondent validation, as noted below. Lindsay (2004) observes that data from large groups such as this

has both advantages and disadvantages. As in that research, my own group comprised participants who share an occupation and sometimes even a workplace, allowing for a good sense of what talk is privileged or allowable in such a context (Warr, 2005). One possible disadvantage of this approach is that sometimes the most articulate can dominate the group, replicating the power structures of the field itself. This group was facilitated by the researcher in such a way as to minimise the dominance of any particular individual, though little intervention was needed, and participants shared the conversational space and time fairly equitably.

Interviewing

My ambivalent position as both a (feminist) researcher and someone 'read' as male makes interviewing a particular site for reflexive practice. As Moi observes,

> *...feminism as critique must also be a critique of feminism. In this way, the would-be critic of the doxa finds herself obliged to reflect on the conditions which produce her as a speaker. As an intellectual, her position becomes particularly ambiguous, insofar as her social or political critique necessarily also finds itself caught up in the mechanisms and strategies – the habitus – of the intellectual field she is in.* (1991, p. 1028)

As an interviewer I needed continually to be conscious of how my words were positioning myself across two fields, the field of academia and the field of childcare. The use of certain language marked me as a researcher, while other language positioned me as a colleague. At times these differing positions were not easy to reconcile. These parts of certain interviews proved awkward, as I needed to restate or reframe my question to make it more accessible within the frame of reference of the person I was talking with. This is a reminder that research is a learning journey, requiring continual adjustment to circumstance and to emerging awareness.

The semi-structured design of the interview allowed for follow-up questions about topics that seemed important. Irwin and Elley (2011) draw attention to the ways that research participants can sometimes force awareness of a particular issue, by giving answers that do not relate to the question posed but to their own concerns instead. They conclude that this is evidence of strategic thinking on behalf of the interviewees. In this study I was struck by how many of the participants emphasised the importance of support from both colleagues and management, and some of the coding categories used in the analysis section were a direct response to respondents' emphasis on this issue.

At times, when I realised that I had erred in not following up lines of questioning that were important to interviewees (this could sometimes be more easily appreciated in listening closely to the audio-recording), I was able to follow-these up via email. This relied on interviewees being willing and able to articulate their thoughts via email, and willing for these contributions also to be part of the research data. Four participants from the group chose to do so, and this greatly added to understanding of their views. Freeman and her colleagues

(2007) observe that close relationships with participants are one of the strengths of qualitative research. For me this ongoing contact has been a way of letting participants know their contribution is valued, and part of my feminist commitment to maximising the benefit to participants, while not taking 'consent' for granted.

I had initially been concerned about the need to conduct many interviews via phone or video-calling services, rather than face-to-face. It became apparent that most participants were more comfortable participating in this way and it was easier to arrange interviews on this basis. Hanna (2012) has noted that increasing comfort with forms of 'virtual presence', such as video-calling, means that such methods of data-collection may now be as reliable a source of data as more traditional interview methods.

Transcribing

I had initially assumed that transcribing was essentially a 'mechanical' process, and part of the drudgery of qualitative research practice. It was Bird's (2005) insightful work on the transcribing process that forced me to rethink this. Transcribing is a useful way to become familiar with the data, in listening and re-listening to each sentence, and in this way it contributes to the process of analysis. It is also a site of further ethical decision-making, in regard to the loss of information that happens within it, as discussed later. As a researcher, my own subjectivity is closely implicated in any decisions I make about how to turn this audio-recording into a text. Bird (2005) asks whose story is being told in the transcript, that of the researcher, or that of those being interviewed?

Although transcribing is often considered a task that is easy to 'outsource' to those who are better at it, I realised the importance of undertaking this myself. In doing so I needed to make decisions about the sorts of information that I wanted the written text to embody from the audio. As a result, I decided from the outset to record the pauses in speech (and often their approximate length), as well as the words that were especially emphasised within each sentence (these were italicised), to try and capture a small part of the nuance embodied in spoken language. Where even these strategies could not capture the apparent meaning, I included in brackets my own interpretation of the person's attitude, for example '[with hesitation]'. While most of this contextual material is not included in the material quoted in the thesis, it remains useful in keeping me aware of the nuances of participants' opinions as I analysis the data.

Warr (2004) raised my awareness of the classed dynamics at play within the transcribing process, because to transcribe people's words faithfully can often draw attention to their lack of educational capital, and can appear patronising. In dealing with these issues in my own transcribing, there were times when I made minor adjustments to people's words (such as making them less colloquial), in situations where it seemed that they might come across as more ignorant if their original words were quoted. At other times, where the colloquial nature

of the speech seemed to be common across all participants, such as substituting ‘gonna’ for ‘going to’, I was happy to leave these intact. There were many occasions when I was genuinely unsure about what choice was best. The final transcripts represent, I hope, a balance between conveying the flavour of the original speech, while at the same time allowing participant’s views to come through unmediated by (classed) judgements about their worth.

In all these thoughts about transcribing, I was aware of the need to send the transcripts to the participants themselves, and wanted them to feel comfortable with what they had said. No-one expressed any discomfort about what they had said, although 8 participants commented on how hard it was to see all the usual hesitations of their speech recorded in black and white. I usually reassured them that almost everyone’s actual speech sounds (and thus looks) like this. Mostly this was participants’ only comment on their transcripts. Only three participants responded to my request to clarify those moments in the transcript when the audio was unclear, and 13 out of the 23 interviewees did not have any response to their transcripts, despite being followed up on multiple occasions. This was a reminder, like Lareau’s (2000) comment about consent forms earlier, that while such research processes are important (and ethical) they are usually optimistic about the actual level of response from participants.

Analysing

Acknowledging the artisanal rather than production-line nature of academic production means paying attention throughout the research process to a theoretical framework, and the values and practices that follow from that. So whether reading literature, designing the study, conducting research or analysing data, there are always decisions that need to be made, and remade. Lareau (2000) talks about this as a process of compromise, knowing what weaknesses in your own research you can live with, and which compromise your theoretical approach too much, and must be addressed.

Given the focus of this thesis on issues of social class, it is worth noting that ‘research’ is a labour process like any other, involving both active thinking as well as more taken-for-granted processes. In describing the methods of this research, I want to avoid the trap of categorising it all as ‘mental’ work, with its implications of ‘higher’ class, cleaner work, and instead hold in mind the embodied nature of all research, whether sitting alone at a desk, interacting with library staff, or out in the field collecting data (Becker, 1986). This acknowledgement of the ‘ordinariness’ of much of what I do helps me be wary of any impulses towards privileging my own expertise while engaging with my research participants.

The last major area of the research process that needs addressing is data analysis. Within qualitative research, the work of analysis occurs from the beginning of the data collection process, in seeking to understand the material being gathered. It is a process that begins early on, but takes on a more focused quality on completion of data collection. It can be

argued that data analysis even continues beyond the life of the specific research project, as the research material continues to be reflected upon in light of subsequent knowledge.

Many approaches to analysis seem to be about particular tools or processes, as if by following these guidelines faithfully, insight will inevitably emerge (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, is typical of this approach). This seems to ignore many of the embodied aspects of research, especially the power relations that are experienced by the researcher. More usefully, Timmermans and Tavory (2012), in their critique of 'grounded theory' approaches, suggest the possibility of 'abductive analysis'. This builds on an extensive knowledge of existing theory to observe where the data does not seem to fit with those theories, sparking the emergence of new theoretical possibilities. As they describe it, 'if we wish to foster theory construction we must be neither theoretical atheists nor avowed monotheists, but informed theoretical agnostics' (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 169). Although not a grounded theorist, I can see the value in this approach. All research seeks to offer some new insight to the wider research community and such insight can only come from knowing the field deeply, and so knowing what is valuable or novel in your own study.

Abductive analysis addresses the relationship between theory and practice, but does not address issues around the relationship that discourse plays in this process. In this research part of my analysis was about the discourses that were present in the field around issues like 'professionalism', or the assumptions about childcare work within everyday discourse across the field of power. This analysis of discourses concerning childcare work draws on Foucault's (1972) conception of discourse, but is given more practical force by Freeman (2004), who uses this type of analysis to show how classed relationships are inextricably shaped by discursive practices.

For my analysis process, the coding categories were based largely on feminist Bourdieusian concepts, and focus predominantly on work, class, relationships as well as workers' intellectual and emotional responses to these. I made the decision to code over a large number of categories (using *Dedoose* software), which made the task more complex but allowed me not to invest too heavily in just a few ideas prior to any detailed analytical work. Some categories were generated when data from the interviews did not fit in any pre-existing categories, but the idea nonetheless seemed important – this represents an abductive process as described above.

These codes were then revised a number of times, either to clarify the ideas that they encapsulated, or to expand or merge items that had taken on a different level of significance. As a number of scholars have noted, the issue of coding is far from simple (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Tudge, 2008). Any coding scheme in the beginning is essentially arbitrary, even though its existence will shape the work substantially. Even more difficult is the endless decision-making over whether a data excerpt fits into a category. This often entails an understanding of the interviewee's own mindset and an attention to the

context in which an item is said. It is inevitably a subjective process, which another researcher might perceive differently. Although the fact that I coded all the data myself implies some consistency across the dataset, even this cannot be certain due to my changing understanding of the research material over the months in which the data analysis took place.

Reflexivity and ethics

As a post-positivist researcher I am wary of making claims to 'truth'. As Lather observes, 'It is not a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing what frames our seeing spaces of constructed visibility and incitements to see which constitute power/knowledge' (1993, p. 675). So, for example, advice about analysis frequently suggests looking for 'confirming' and 'disconfirming' examples of evidence within the data, as a way to guide against observer 'bias', and to ensure sociological rigour (e.g., Freeman, et al., 2007). Opie calls into question this 'deeply engrained valorizing of quantity' (1992, p. 55), illustrating in her own research how sometimes the most significant issues within the data are *not* spoken about because of how difficult or painful they are to the speaker. In only valuing quantity we ignore the effects of both power (what is allowed to be spoken) and emotion (what is able to be spoken). So in my own data, it is much more acceptable for staff to talk about how much they love working with children than it is to talk about the problems with their job, or the inadequacies of the remuneration. Those more difficult issues require trust between researcher and participants, and sometimes may not emerge at all. One of the reasons for recording silences in the transcript, as noted above, is to pay attention to what issues have more difficulty being spoken.

Research needs to be more than an 'obscene prying into the lives of others in the name of science' (Lather, 1993, p. 678). As a feminist I wish my research to be valuable to the field of childcare, as well as conducted with respect for participants. This involves ongoing effort, from when the research is conceived, through the data collection, and on into the writing phase. It involves thinking closely about how to research the issue, anticipating possible issues or problems, paying attention to personal biases, negotiating relationships, weighing up harms and benefits, and being respectful about the reporting process, both to outsiders as well as back to participants.

Studying the lives and practices of childcare workers requires paying attention to my changing relationship with the field, from practitioner to researcher, because those are fundamentally different roles. My familiarity with this area, from years of working in the field myself, offers both advantages and disadvantages as a researcher. On the positive side, it provides an understanding of the pleasures and pains of childcare work that allows me more easily to make a connection with those I interview. On the downside, such familiarity means

that I too will have been shaped by what Bourdieu calls 'the doxa' (2001, p. 122), possibly taking for granted many things about childcare work that need to be called into question.

Any research project is a process, which requires flexibility in dealing with the changing understanding of the theoretical landscape, the difficulties in data collection, and sometimes the academic and bureaucratic hurdles. Given the contingent nature of human relationships, any information received will be affected by factors as diverse as the moods of both researcher and researched, the venue or medium in which the data was collected, the types of personal interactions that preceded that process, and the manner in which it was collected, including the developing skills of the researcher. Such factors are unquantifiable, but being clear and explicit about the processes involved allows the reader more effectively to make decisions about the relevance of the claims made in the thesis.

The researcher's location in social space

The need to examine personal biases and allegiances has become a widely recognised practice within the social sciences. Indeed, Kenway and McLeod put it more forcefully, arguing that reflexivity has become 'an imperative, a doxa of post-positivist educational research' (2004, p. 527). This is more than a mechanical process, though, informing all aspects of the research process. Given the subject matter of this thesis, my classed and gendered locations require particular attentiveness. In thinking about this, I have found it useful to be guided by the question asked by Connell and colleagues; 'Into which class [gender] relations does this person enter?' (1982, p. 145). This has been a valuable question because it is a reminder that these relations depend on a context. A person may enter into a number of different class and gender relations, depending on the situation and the people present.

Class

Coming into the childcare field as a researcher – even a graduate student –implies a level of educational capital, and a location in social space, rarely accessible by most of the workers I was interviewing. I experienced a similar outsider status during my years working in the field through being a trained kindergarten teacher (degree-qualified) working in childcare- although this role is now becoming more common as a result of ongoing professionalisation of the field (see Chapter 6). Although being a kindergarten teacher is hardly a prestigious role in wider society, it does involve university training, which is only likely for those individuals who grow up in families with high cultural capital. My experience was no exception. Although only one of my parents attended University, they both expected all their children to aim for a University education, and supported us in various ways to be able to do this. This is a form of privilege that becomes particularly apparent in a childcare environment, where many of my colleagues left school at the earliest opportunity and have pursued studies through vocational training since then, often while working full-time.

Bourdieu's (1984) iconic work on class distinction exposes how class becomes embodied as preferences about clothing, food and so on. There were times in my work in childcare when I was forced to acknowledge my own classed values, such as making different assumptions about what would constitute 'appropriate' food for a staff meeting[14]. As a worker this meant occasional sense of discomfort for me and for some of my co-workers, as we were forced into awareness of being different. As Jamrozik and Sweeney (1996) observe, talking about class (at least directly) has become a taboo subject in contemporary Australia (See also; Connell, 2004; Pini, Price, & McDonald, 2010). Therefore any discomfort was not able to become a subject for a discussion, and so did not generate productive new ways of relating beyond or challenging classed values. On a more positive note, this sense of not fitting in, in both classed and gendered ways, forced me as a staff member into a more analytical and sociological stance that now orients my childcare research. One of the aims of this thesis is to confront that taboo, and generate some attention about the invisibility of classed values and relationships within the childcare field.

This outsider status has informed how I research. As I contact interviewees, and talk with them about their work, I remain highly conscious of the classed practices that I am aware of, such as the ways I speak, and the sorts of questions I have asked, and how these might or might not be shaping the research in particular ways. One of the interview questions - *'What is special or distinctive about the role of a childcare worker?*' - was particularly interesting. Although I believed this was a reasonably straightforward way of eliciting people's views on what was valuable about their work, it was the question that most often puzzled my interviewees. Although this might mean it was simply a bad question, it might also alert me to a particular class-based sensibility that is prepared to ask, 'What is distinctive about me, my family, or where and how I live?' (that perhaps embodies some level of privilege). If you took a job in childcare simply because it was available, then perhaps you have never needed or wanted to think about what is special about the job.

Gender

As a male-ascribed person working in long day care, I was part of a small minority within the workforce. As an outsider, and as someone presumed not to have a 'natural' inclination for childcare work, it was necessary while working to prove repeatedly to parents or colleagues my willingness and capability (Andrew, 2010). In being willing to do so I learned to take on the occupational habitus of childcare, as well as emulating the gendered habitus that most women brought with them into their work (Colley, 2006). The unconscious nature of habitus means that much of what had to be learnt was not made explicit, and my 'mistakes' were usually only noticeable in hindsight, witnessing the reactions of colleagues when I made different assumptions from those they did. Having now acquired a reasonable 'feel for the game', or what Fowler describes as a 'social mastery of the body' (2003, p. 472), means that as a researcher I have a reasonable chance of 'speaking the same language' as my

research participants, and so gaining their trust. There are some similarities with Ortiz's experience of cross-gender research, and his need to develop a form of 'muted masculinity' (2005, p. 267) in order to gain the trust of his female research participants. Unlike Ortiz, however, I do not see myself as having a 'real' male self that is different from my ethnographic self.

In the childcare field, being read by others as male creates a number of assumptions about my trustworthiness, and my (in)ability to do the work. It was clear, for example, that despite it not being the focus of the research, a number of participants brought up the subject of 'discrimination' against men in childcare, out of an awareness of my outsider status. This may have been an example of where they, as research participants, were seeking to create rapport with me, rather than vice-versa.

Race

Though 'race' is not a central concern of this thesis, it is not a topic I can comfortably ignore. As a white, and Anglo-Australian, I know that part of my privilege, either in childcare or in Australian academia, is not to have to notice my racial and cultural background (Hage, 2000; McIntosh, 2003). The same is true for my research participants, when asked in the survey to identify their own cultural background. For most of those who are light-skinned, English-speaking Australian, they unproblematically put down their cultural background as 'Australian'. For those with darker skin colours or more varied cultural backgrounds, the answer was not so simple, and involved often complex self-descriptions.

Knowing that the childcare field has a culturally-diverse workforce (though the government collects no records about this issue), one of my aims with the research was to include as much diversity among the interviewees as possible. Blackmore and Hutchison (2010) observed in their study that the self-selection inherent in those willing to be interviewed made it difficult to interview families whose first language was not English. With this in mind, I worked hard in the data collection process to encourage as wide a response from staff as possible. Twelve out of the twenty-three workers interviewed are from other than Anglo-Australian backgrounds, and so may have experienced disadvantage due to the 'wider symbolic economy' (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 75) regarding race in Australia, which privileges Anglo-Australians or those who can pass as such (Abraham, 2006).

Anglo-Australians, although being the most culturally and racially powerful group in Australia at this point, are themselves occupiers, settlers and immigrants to the lands of various indigenous groups. It is important to remember the political history and the dispossession that underpins the existence of a majority-white society and education system (J. Miller, 1985). While talking about the relative invisibility of worker voices in the wider debates around childcare practices, I cannot ignore the even greater invisibility of indigenous voices within that conversation, though this is starting to be remedied in more recent initiatives

within the field (Early Childhood Australia, 2013c; Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 6).

When interviewees brought up the subject of cultural differences, they were asked further about this, to provide valuable context to the experience of childcare work. However the diversity of cultures represented even in this small study means that generalising about the impact of cultural background on work practices is unhelpful. While it has not been the analytical focus of this thesis, it is valuable to be aware of the diverse backgrounds of participants and the ways these contribute to the distinct social space that constitutes the field of childcare in Australia.

Power of the researcher

As a post-positivist I understand the contextual nature of power, and the ways that it is shaped through discourse. The power of research is that it is fundamentally a discursive process, shaping knowledge-power through the material decisions that are made throughout the research process. This section outlines a few of these issues, and how they have shaped this study.

As an observer, however unobtrusive, my presence will always impact on what I am researching. Understanding from the outset that research, and the theories that underpin it, are an intervention in the social world (Burawoy, 1998), not just an attempt to understand it, is a reminder of the responsibilities we always have to those with whom we are researching. It is also a reminder that the data that is collected is never 'pure' data, but will be affected by who the researcher is and how it is collected and interpreted. I was very conscious of this process as I interviewed, constantly wondering how any follow-up questions I asked in the 'semi-structured' interview format might be leading or shaping particular responses.

My physical presence as a researcher is an intervention because I cannot escape my embodiment. I am embodied, amongst other things as a particular classed, gendered and raced being. The idea of embodiment is important within both post-positivist research and feminist research. Epstein (2007) puts flesh on these bones, arguing that to frame knowledge as something embodied leads inexorably to particular research practices, because 'the personal can not be divorced from the political, nor can the practical be separated from the abstract' (2007, p. 9). Embodiment underscores the importance of reflexivity and the need to question abstract categorisation and over-simplifications which can disguise the complexities and multidimensionality of the research material (Sayer, 2005).

Moreover, as Maynard (2008) notes, feminist research seeks a 'non-exploitative' relationship with participants, one based on trust, that is more likely to generate honest responses, and better information from participants. This is the paradox that Harding (1987) observed, that feminist research is more 'objective', more plausible, despite being politicised. In my own study, it is this relationship with interviewees that has been critical. Interviews where I did a better job of listening and trying to understand produced richer responses from participants.

Discursive power

One of the less talked about (but significant) ethical issues is the reduction of information that occurs throughout any research process. This is unavoidable. The data in any project is usually an unwieldy, disorganised cluster of information that needs to be sifted, sorted and analysed to yield the insights that are hoped for from the research. This follows the sorting that has already occurred as interviewees select the information they tell researchers (Freeman, et al., 2007).

The problem with that sifting is that in every stage of the process information that may or may not be valuable is lost. So with a face-to-face interview, for example, all the data of an immersive complex physical environment (sight, smell, touch, sound etc.) is reduced, in most cases, to a single audio-recording, of variable quality. This audio-recording is then subject to further information losses, as all the nuances of background noise, tone-of-voice, silences and sub-vocalisations, are reduced to some text-based version of that audio. Finally then, after a process of analysis, a small amount of this text is then selected to be used in any writing based on the research.

This becomes an ethical issue as I consider how I should collect data, and how it should be edited down to the final text. Some words are selected and many left out. What alternate story could be told from the data left behind that will not get told in the 'official' version? There is one sense, though, in which this loss of information is also a gain, and an important one. In reducing complex phenomena to words-on-a-page, it is made accessible to thought and analysis in a way that was not available before (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). In my analysis I have tried always to be aware of what seemed most important to participants themselves, as well as attempting to honour the spirit of what they chose to say across the whole interview, not just particular utterances.

Voice, power and commitment

In this section I look at some of the ethical issues around voice. I look at whose voices are heard in the research, why this is so, and how feminist research methods try and shift the taken-for-granted power relations of the research process. As I suggested above, one of the aims of the research was to hear from as broad a selection of workers as possible, across all ages, levels of experience and training, and cultural backgrounds. However this assumes that all workers will feel equally able to speak, given the opportunity, and this is not the case. Those most likely to speak will always be those with the most capital, particularly cultural capital, who because of this capital feel more free to talk than others (Dillabough, 2004).

Even though I worked hard to encourage as diverse a group of people to be interviewed as possible, it seemed that many whose opinions would have been valuable were unwilling to participate for some reason. I can only speculate on what these reasons might be, but they might involve such things as: being suspicious of me as a male-assigned person, especially if meeting in person; resentment about the long hours of childcare and this being 'one more

thing'; belief that their own views were not valuable (reflecting ongoing symbolic domination); or perhaps, as seen below, a general suspicion of academic researchers not understanding. These factors may be at work in reducing the diversity of the sample, particularly in regard to the most marginalised workers, such as the very young, or those from Muslim backgrounds who have felt highly discriminated against in the last decade in Australia.

This difficulty in hearing from the most marginalised voices is true across most qualitative research projects. Bretherton (2010) discusses this point in her own research on turnover within the childcare workforce. She observes that while managers and directors of services were easy to access as interviewees, at the other end of the childcare hierarchy casual workers were much less willing to participate.

More interesting is the reasons why some people decide to speak out. For a number of the interviewees, they specifically stated that they wanted to be interviewed so their voice would be heard. Rachel, one of the research participants describes why she decided to be interviewed;

> *...it's interesting, because I remember.... my coordinator asking me, years ago, if I wanted to be... part of some research with* [early childhood academic] *and I said 'no', and the reason, I remember actually, saying 'no', at the time... is... because I felt like I wasn't where I... wanted to be within my practices, there were things that I was still doing, I guess, that I didn't like, about myself, and... and I was act... I was scared, because I thought, 'Oh, what if... some of this stuff, um... gets out!' Do you know what I mean?* (Rachel, 40s)

She goes on to describe how her experience since then, in doing more study, has made her realise that research is about all experiences, both good and bad, and about how these are interpreted by the researcher for their audience. Having seen that some researchers could and did understand the complex lives of childcare workers made her determined to be involved this time. Feminist researchers have observed, as was the case with Rachel, that participants often want to be involved because they, as does the researcher, feel strongly about the issues being researched (Maynard, 2008; Opie, 1992). This commitment to participation constitutes a real benefit to them, as well as to the researcher and her community. Abbie, another interviewee, is really clear about this aspect of why she chose to be involved;

> *...when you asked me to do this I was really interested to be able to... come and speak about it, because I'd rather make it better... and keep the good people in the industry rather than lose people* (Abbie, 20s)

Abbie's commitment to the field is about more than just the children, as will be seen with her and other workers in the following chapters. Archer and her colleagues (2007) suggest that the choice by some of the young women in their study to 'speak out' may indicate strength or resistance to silencing, rather than privilege, and suggests on their part an attempt to gain some symbolic capital. I see a similar phenomenon in this research.

Speaking as if others can hear you

In acknowledging my power as a researcher I are able more clearly to identify my aims in this process. In writing, talking and publishing based on the voices of others, Mihn-Ha (2011) offers a useful touchstone for feminist research. She suggests that a good way to think about how we share research is the concept of 'speaking nearby'. She describes this as reporting the research as if those about whom you are speaking were there in the room with you. This makes the ethics of the process immediate and visceral. Would I say this same thing, in the same way, if I were saying it to that person's face? For my own work, this is a powerful challenge. In wanting to deal respectfully with my interviewees, I must be sure that what I say is respectful, even if I am questioning or challenging their implied view of the situation.

Conclusion

In concluding this chapter I discuss how this research changed from its initial conception, and explore some of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. This is an important part of considering the overall trustworthiness of the study, allowing the reader to make a better judgement about the validity or otherwise of the findings. This research began as a Master's thesis, with the aim of exploring the classed relations experienced in the relationship between workers and parents in childcare. Given the steep learning curve in coming back to study after years of childcare work, my initial understanding of methodology was in conflict with my theoretical position. I was often caught out by my positivist assumptions, such as the imagined need to triangulate my data with a survey component, out of unfamiliarity with methodological aspects of the post-positivist paradigm.

Early on in the research a number of things became apparent. Firstly, that the survey was going to reveal no meaningful information, statistically or incidentally, and so was useful only as a way to recruit participants into the interview phase of data collection. In this sense it worked quite well, being an easy way to make contact with possible participants, and not very intimidating (five minute survey) compared to the idea of a long interview. Secondly, it was clear that given the relative lack of research on this subject, particularly in the Australian context, trying to interview both workers and parents effectively was going to make this a very large project. With feedback from my confirmation committee I was able to refocus the project to examine the lived experiences of workers only, and explore the value they found in their own work. The initial interviews I had done – seven of them – were then able to function as a guide to the ongoing interview process (Yin, 1994), providing a valuable perspective on the views of childcare workers that assisted me greatly in reworking my questions and examining how best to achieve my research aims. I was able to realise that many of my questions were unnecessary, and that particular subjects, such as the emotions experienced by workers, were particularly significant. This allowed me to refine and shorten my list of questions for the main round of interviews (see Appendix I for interview schedules).

Shortening the interviews also had the advantage of making them more accessible (O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012) and to increase this accessibility I offered the possibility of joint interviews as well, though in the end all respondents were happy to be interviewed singly.

The initial analysis from the pilot study revealed the commitment of the workers, and raised questions about whether I was recruiting a particularly motivated cohort of interviewees (see also; Bretherton, 2010, pp. 23, n.28). This prompted me, as I noted above, to try deliberately to find workers who might be less motivated, as these might be experiencing very different sorts of classed relations from other workers. This phenomenon of highly committed workers turned out to be one of the main findings of the research, and was true to some extent even with the 'less motivated' research participants.

Responsibility and authority

Given the emphasis throughout the thesis on the responsibilities felt and taken up by workers, it is noteworthy that researchers also must acknowledge this process. One of the more troubling issues in post-positivist research seems to be who is responsible for the research, and the findings that come out of it. Yu (2011) discusses at length the balance of power between researcher and researched, and the trust (or mistrust) that occurs in this relationship. Although she believes the desire for a collaborative relationship is a good idea ethically, in practice she suggests that researchers often fool themselves about the power dynamics of their relationship with research participants. Though I aim for a collaborative relationship with my participants, and certainly drew on our shared understanding of the field during the interviews, I must acknowledge that I now have a different relationship to the childcare field as a researcher. The increasing cultural capital I am gaining in this process is likely to exacerbate some of the class-based differences I talked about earlier.

Gorelick offers a useful perspective on these difficulties, acknowledging that the 'researcher is transformed in the process of research – influenced and taught by her respondent-participants' (1991, p. 469). She also affirms that the researcher must ultimately take responsibility for the final version of the research. To do so is to take an ethical stance, acknowledging the discursive power that comes from access to academic channels, in terms of what is reported and to which audiences. Taking responsibility means also taking responsibility for all the flaws in the research, while still seeking to engage respectfully with those who participated.

This issue of what is to be reported about the research is important. Gillies (2007) makes the important point that however much researchers might empathise or share an identity with those who participate in the research, we cannot justify claiming authority on their behalf, as their spokesperson. She acknowledges this specifically as a danger for feminist researchers, in talking on behalf of other women. This would be an easy trap to fall into as a longtime childcare worker. Instead I need to acknowledge that whatever insights I have into childcare

practices originate with me, for better or worse. When research participants consent to their words being used, they do not consent to being misused as co-authors of opinions with which they may disagree. Although respondent validation, such as the focus group process, can improve the research, it does not absolve this basic responsibility, nor allow me to assume the authority of others.

Trustworthiness and convincing research

I want to finish this chapter with what is usually a critical issue for most researchers, in any tradition, namely the 'validity' of the research findings. Qualitative researchers, particularly within a post-positivist tradition, necessarily have their own perspective on this. Mishler's (2010) view goes to the heart of the matter, I think, when he suggests (as a 'reformed' quantitative researcher) that research is about trustworthiness, rather than 'truth'. As a researcher I can make my research more trustworthy by being explicit about the processes I went through, and the flaws in that process, such as my elucidation above about the processes involved in reducing complex interview data to a uniform transcript. Ultimately though, as Mishler and others suggest, the validity of a qualitative study is demonstrated by the eagerness and interest with which it is taken up by others (Dennis, 2009; Freeman, et al., 2007; Mishler, 2010). In doing so, they are paying the study the highest respect they can, by staking their own career trajectory and academic reputation on it also. This acknowledges, as feminists do (e.g., Harding, 1987, p. 182), that validity is not a neutral but a political process, and constitutes a challenge to, or acceptance of, existing relationships of power.

Chapter 5: Exploited work

Introduction

In this chapter I look at the economic conditions of childcare work, showing how this impacts upon childcare workers, and their ability to do their job. To do so is to focus on the distributive (economic) aspects of the work, although as Fraser (1999; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) has argued, these can never be separated from the cultural valuation of the work in real-world situations. In doing so I show that workers are aware of the devalued economic status of childcare, and examine how they experience this. I explore how this economic valuation is shaped by classing processes, and look at some of the problems with reductionist approaches to social class when examining the childcare field. I suggest that childcare work, through its lack of value in both classed and gendered terms, comes to define the value of those who do it, whatever their prior locations in social place. Childcare work is exploited work, I maintain, but this exploitation has been normalised by those in the field – it is always present, but rarely talked about. Lastly, I look at how this causes some workers within the field to disengage, and how this can be related to the high turnover of the childcare workforce.

Pay, conditions of work, and bargaining power

Many discussions of childcare draw attention to the low wages and poor conditions of the field (Andrew & Newman, 2012; Brennan, et al., 2009; Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, 2006; Friendly & Prentice, 2009; Pocock & Hill, 2007; Randall, 2000; Simms, 2006; Tarrant, et al., 2009; Whitebook, 1999). In the context of thinking about wanting to leave childcare, one of the participants in the study, Brittany, brought up the issue of how much she earned;

> *Yarrow: So... and obviously the pay, like you said, is an issue... So... what do you think we're worth in childcare? Like, how much would you like to be making a year, for what we do in the job, and how hard we work?*
>
> *Brittany: Um... oh... we, I make about thirty-five, I make about thirty grand a year now, or under....*
>
> *I don't know, just maybe a bit more... Oh, fifty grand a year... Yeah, no, but like... then I think, 'cos like our childcare is probably a hundred and ten dollars a day... for the average child, then I think, 'Oh, gee, I feel sorry for parents having to pay that much...' but... then I guess, you know, they must be able to afford it... somehow...* [laughs] (Brittany, 20s)

It is worth noting that the current minimum wage in Australia is $31 500 (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2012), and that Brittany is considered a 'qualified' worker, as she holds a diploma level (two-year) qualification. So whichever of her estimates of her annual salary is

correct she earns from just below to a little above the minimum wage. As of 2010, 23.4% of the full-time childcare workforce in Victoria[15] earned *less than* the minimum wage, and this rises to 46.7% of the workforce when part-time employees are included (Australian Federal Government, 2010, p. Table 4.7.3). Research from within feminist economics has identified the significant pay penalty experienced by all those involved in carework, and the 'largest penalty by far is for doing childcare' (England, et al., 2002, p. 746). It is also worth noting that even though Brittany is getting paid close to the minimum wage, her main concern seems to be the expense for the parent-users of her centre, rather than her own economic well-being.

Even those who are degree-qualified, such as Samantha, can find it difficult to get paid the wages that they are entitled to, under collective bargaining agreements;

> *in terms of the money situation, I think it's ridiculous. You know, and I work for a private... organisation, who say that they have... um... they don't do the VECTAA* [Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants] *award wage, but they have wage negotiations, which is a load of... codswabble... It's their way of paying me... I think at the moment I'm about seven dollars* under *the VECTAA award wage, an hour...* (Samantha, 30s)

The small size of many services, and their isolation from each other, makes it easy for many workers to be underpaid according to the statutory award wages that were once compulsory. The government, despite expecting ongoing improvement in the quality and amount of work done by childcare workers, have not yet matched these productivity gains with wage increases[16]. As their recent document about future strategies for the early childhood workforce noted;

> *Matters such as lower pay and conditions compared to other sectors are recognised as affecting professional status but are outside the scope of the strategy, as they are for employers and employees to negotiate (Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012, p. 4)*

The government acknowledges the poor pay and conditions of childcare workers, and that this may undermine their status, but then lays responsibility for this onto employers and employees themselves. This is concerning, given that successive governments have produced this outcome, through the foreseeable effects of various policies, such as expanding childcare subsidies to private childcare services, or the effects of WorkChoices legislation (Federal Government, 2005). The result has been a situation where around 70% of childcare workers across Victoria are employed by private organisations (Brennan, et al., 2009). Research from New Zealand suggests that those working for private employers have poorer working conditions, higher turnover and other negative indicators (Mitchell & Brooking, 2007). Prentice (2009) makes a similar argument, in her analysis of childcare seen through the economic lens of global competitiveness. She argues that;

> *predominately female childcare providers are unlikely to find a remedy for their low pay, bad working conditions, and high turnover rates, or to see improvements in the*

> *quality of care they provide. The acceleration of corporatized childcare services will exacerbate these poor conditions* (Prentice, 2009, p. 702).

Narrow economic policies such as these, that allow for-profit services to gain a large slice of childcare business, exacerbate the relative powerlessness of workers in regard to wages (Pocock, et al., 2008). These low wages, especially across a lifetime of work, restrict childcare workers' ability to accumulate economic capital. Moreover the low pay rate reflects the low value of childcare work in society, and this low value is reflected in workers' difficulty in accumulating symbolic capital within the field of power.

Childcare work and the classing gaze

In the previous section I explored briefly the claims made about the pay and conditions of the childcare workforce. This section looks at how the classing gaze has been turned onto childcare, with the frequent suggestion that childcare is staffed by 'working class' women (Bowman & Cole, 2009; Braun, et al., 2008; Colley, 2006; Haylett, 2002; Huppatz, 2010; McDowell, 2007; Musgrave, 2010; M. Nelson & Schutz, 2007; O'Connell, 2010; O'Connor & Goodwin, 2002; Vincent & Braun, 2010; Wrigley, 1995). My intention here is not to deny the validity of this research, as discussed in Chapter 3, but to show that such *a priori* assumptions can make it harder to see the differences between those who work in childcare. As Sayer has observed, it is;

> *vital to distinguish what people can do or become from what they actually do or are allowed to do; in everyday life, the former is often wrongly inferred from the latter, so that those who occupy lowly positions that deny their holders autonomy are seen as inherently inferior* (2011b, p. 196)

To suggest that these women are 'working-class', without examining this claim further, is in many ways to assume that because they have 'only' been able to work in childcare, this locates them in a particular location in social space associated with lack of economic and cultural capital. It is to confuse the values that have come to be associated with the occupation with the personal value and status of those who do the work.[17] A similar phenomena is at work with gender as it is with class. Although the very high proportion of women as workers in childcare often obscures this phenomenon, it is clear that men in childcare experience the same misrecognition as women, with an occupational valuation being mistaken for a personal one[18] (England, et al., 2002; Murray, 2001; Perales, 2013).

Classing processes

This classing process becomes most obvious in the interviews with those who move into or out of childcare, or different roles within childcare. This was noticed both by participants who felt valued more, and those who felt valued less. Ondine, who whilst working studied for her degree, and has now moved to a kindergarten role within the same childcare centre, reflects in an email communication;

> *I noticed that in my interview I felt respected and appreciated by parents in my role as 'childcare worker'. However, I see this in a new light now. Over the Christmas break, I miraculously transformed into a kindergarten teacher, and although I personally see my role this year as very similar to last year (I just have more time to do everything now!), the attitudes of the parents was totally unexpected. As I took on this new role in my same workplace, I have many families that I have previously cared for their older siblings, and in the first few weeks of the term, nearly every one of them came to me asking "So, how does it feel now that you are a teacher?" What was I before?* (Ondine, 30s)

The lack of value that parents had for Ondine's role as a childcare worker only became apparent to her once she had moved 'up' to being a kindergarten teacher. Ondine seems sceptical about her new status, but observes elsewhere in her interview that the extra pay is welcome.

Samantha has experienced a different classed trajectory, from being employed in a school to working in childcare. She reflects on the drop in status that she experienced;

> *I was... in that position where I was kind-of like, 'Gosh, I do not want to be in childcare, I don't wanna be... you know, in that industry, I would much prefer to be in a school...*

However when circumstances led to her working in childcare, she realised she had been wrong, and was then able to question her former values – values which are widespread even among those who use childcare;

> *I had the luxury of sort-of seeing a great centre at work, going, 'Oh, yeah, this is amazing' and I guess because I was open to seeing what was actually happening... the value in it. But yeah, I definitely think... one of the most frustrating things in my job is to... try and get my head around why a family or where a parent would send their children to me if they don't think this is a worthy profession. Yeah, and that just frustrates me to no end....*
>
> [later in the interview]
>
> *I worked in schools, for, um... for the years before I come into childcare, and I think... seeing the difference, the respect that a teacher in a school gets, from parents, it's just amazing! It's like a complete turn of the tables.* (Samantha, 30s).

As Ondine and Samantha experienced, despite their relatively advantaged cultural capital within the field of childcare, they are not immune to being judged and valued by the status of childcare work within the field of power. In fact this is such a fundamental part of the childcare experience that every interviewee involved in this study mentions it. Samantha's comment about the respect teachers receive compared to childcare workers is a good indication, I suggest, of the amount of symbolic capital that can potentially be accrued within each occupation.

The figure of the babysitter - classed and gendered judgement

My argument is that those working in childcare, however much they enjoy their work, or have chosen to be there, become subject to the discursive construction of childcare work. The status of childcare is doubly devalued, being associated in a classed sense, with unskilled

'dirty' work, and in a gendered sense, with the domestic duties of women. Most often when workers talk about this issue, about being classed by the job, they talk about being considered 'babysitters';

> *they are not familiar with our job, and... they see our job as, um... just taking care of kids and babysitting, and changing nappies, but it's not. So we are like educators... yep.* (Soek-Teng, 30s)
>
> *coming from private centres... from different areas that I've worked in and that, some of... some people do view it as a babysitting... sort-of service. You know, they're happy to drop off their kids, pick 'em up, and you try to talk to them and tell them about the day, and they're like, 'Yea, whatever, not interested...'* (Mia, 40s)
>
> *I think in the wider community, we're still just babysitters...* (Julie, 30s)
>
> *I think, still, an awful lot of people think of it as babysitting. Filling in time, keeping children safe... and entertained.* (Marie, 40s)
>
> *Oh, this is part of my frustration, in Australia right now, is that we are baby-sitters.* (Lauren, 30s)
>
> *parents are starting to realise that it's early childhood education, it's not just babysitting, or daycare, or whatever... it's not just all about playing, as you would know* [laughs] *it's kind-of insulting when people think that* (Abbie, 20s)

The concept of 'babysitting' is a touchstone for childcare workers around their own value, because it is common knowledge that a babysitter is a young person whose only responsibility is to ensure a child is safe for a couple of hours while the parents are out[19]. Given the complexities of childcare work, and the expectations that it now comes with from governments, parents, and management, to be considered just a babysitter is insulting.

Interviewees also had other ways of describing the lack of value that childcare has within society. As I will show later in this chapter, the lack of value of childcare work is not accidental, but has historical roots, perhaps in flawed perceptions of women's less pressing need for good wages (England, et al., 2007). This low value is a reality for all workers throughout their time in childcare, as these comments indicate;.

> *you do have some who don't value, um... the industry as much, and... they kind-of do treat you like a baby-care... baby-care centre and... and I do think that... our job is looked down upon, yeah.* (Lea, 20s)
>
> *if you're not... um, good-enough to get into Uni and do real teaching, as they call it, then you become a childcare worker* [wry laugh] (Dianne, 40s)
>
> *other people might think it's, um... you don't need much qualifications for it, or you don't... you know... some people might look down on that sort of thing, but.. I think if they came and spent a day or a week, they would realise that it's quite... demanding... mentally and physically...* (Lisa, 40s)
>
> *I think people still see it as... basic care. Like they want to know if their child's safe, they've got their clothes, their shoes and everything...* (Serene, 30s)
>
> *even though no-one's ever... disrespected the fact that I've done it, or anything, I still... have always felt... some sort of stigma of saying, 'I'm a childcare worker'* [laughs painfully]. *And... it's a funny thing, it's so strong*. (Ondine, 30s)

The range of ways that interviewees articulate the lack of value is broad, and paints a clear picture of their experience of their working lives. It is a reminder that childcare workers experience not just a distributive injustice, in terms of their low pay, but also the injustice of misrecognition, and these aspects cannot be disentangled. The low pay of childcare work leads to the assumption that it is unskilled labour (after all, it only earns minimum wage), and from that assumption to a widespread dismissal of the importance of the work, and the skills that it involves.

Shame, judgement and respectability

Sayer (2005) talks extensively about the emotions felt by people in relation to class and classed practices. This was Ondine's point, above, about feeling the stigma of working in childcare. Sayer (2005) talks about the shame that people feel as a result of classed judgements made about their clothing, their beliefs or their identities. As he suggests;

> *people are most likely to feel shamed* even by judgements they disagree with *in situations where they have some regard for those who judge them negatively,* where they have to cooperate with them on a regular basis*, and where they are in a minority, or perhaps a silenced majority* (Sayer, 2005, p. 157; emphasis added)

I believe that even though workers disagree with other's opinions about childcare, as their comments above demonstrate, they are still likely to feel shame as a result of being 'looked down upon', even if they do not say so directly. They continue to have to experience or contest such shame because they are forced into regular contact with those making those judgements, whether this is parent-users of the service, or perhaps their own friends and family.

Lauren describes the shame she apparently experiences in regard to her husband's opinions about childcare work;

> *I'm going to feel really bad saying this,* [unclear] *um... I feel sometimes... that... my... of all people my husband – he's so supportive, and I don't want to come off that he's not – but um, often when he's looking at positions, or talking about it's, oh, 'What kind-of money can you make with that job?' and how smart you are in order to do different jobs, and I feel... not as smart, or not as important... based on what... I have chosen... to do.... I try not to take it personally. I know he's not trying to say anything bad about me, and I have confronted him, once, I think, about... that it, it does... cut, sometimes, that he talks about all these people and how smart they are, every time you talk to me.* (Lauren, 30s)

Lauren really struggles to articulate her thoughts on this issue, perhaps because shame is something that people tend to want to hide from, and because she knows that her husband does care about her. However his understanding of the accepted (low) status of childcare in society is quite accurate, and he seems to allow this to cloud his perspective on the meaning Lauren finds in her work.

This, I suggest, is how classing processes work, even for those who might come from more advantaged locations within social space. It appears, from Lauren's description of her life

throughout the interview, that she has access to moderate amounts of cultural capital, such as a university degree, which might normally allow her to make choices other than childcare work. Her location in social space thus diverges from the majority of the childcare workforce, many of whom have little educational capital. However this may be almost irrelevant in the face of the classing effects of doing a devalued job. Whatever class labels a sociologist might give to Lauren, she nonetheless becomes classed by the work itself, even in the eyes of her family members, and so becomes subject to a form of class-based shame. Though for many, as we shall see in the next chapter, childcare seems like respectable work, it seems that for Lauren, in the eyes of those she knows, childcare is apparently not respectable at all.

This parallels the findings of Dyer and her colleagues (2008), examining hospital staff practices, who show how low-level workers become 'dirty' by their association in others' minds with the inevitably messy work they do dealing with human bodies. That childcare workers must frequently change nappies, wipe children's bottoms, or clean up vomit inevitably feeds into the low status of the work (Skeggs, 1997). As Anne mentioned in her interview, her Mum did not want her doing this work because she 'might have to help children go to the toilet, and that would be horrible'. By working in childcare, all these women, whatever their existing location in social space, risk a similar classed and gendered set of judgements, and must find a way to cope with the possible shamefulness of their dirty job.

Shame and value

I will explore the emotional implications of becoming classed by childcare work more fully in Chapter 8 but at this point I think it is worth drawing attention to one important issue. To feel shame, as I argue workers do, has real-world implications for the field of childcare more generally. Shame is a hard issue to acknowledge (shame can be an effective way to silence people) and therefore it is not often talked about explicitly by interviewees. There were a few examples though, where research participants acknowledged how it shapes their experience. As Ondine explains;

> *I've also worked with a lot of people who aren't good at it, and don't care about it, and it can be a really sad place... and has really the wrong... you know, the wrong intentions, and um... Yeah, and I think those are the things that has reinforced that... that... um... those two sides of the feeling for me, because it is something that I... I do feel ashamed of the way that things are run... sometimes.* (Ondine, 30s)

As can be seen from the various hesitations and repetitions, this is not an easy issue for Ondine to acknowledge, because feeling ashamed is usually something we want to avoid.

Another participant, Anne, though talking about the care-giving role as a parent rather than a childcare worker, clearly understands how shame can be connected to your sense of the lack of value others see in what you do;

> *But if someone says,* [ashamed tone and posture] *'I'm, I'm only a stay-at-home dad, you know my wife earns more money than me,' then you can guess that the childcare that they're going to be giving to the children, is going to be from... um... a...*

> *powerless state... rather than a strong state... and... if you can parent from strength, because you love doing it, and because you want to do it, and because you choose to do it, then... then you're a happier person to parent, and it's a better experience for both, the parent and the child...* (Anne, 50s)

From her last remark, it is apparent that Anne has done a lot of thinking about the process of parenting/caregiving, and how important it is to value what you are doing to counteract other's assumptions about its low worth. This personal reflexivity has helped her understand something very important about the field. As Sayer explains, 'Low-level shame sometimes cannot be articulated, indeed it can *lead to* withdrawal and inarticulacy in terms of a lack of authority to speak' (2005, p. 157; emphasis in original). It is this shame, which is usually unwarranted, that can sometimes make it difficult for workers to articulate their opposition to policies that are imposed by governments or management. Such silence is often mistaken for consent or acquiescence to these policies. I will show in a moment how this shame is a key to understanding the exploitation involved in childcare work. Before doing so, I want to suggest one way that childcare workers try and overcome their sense of shame – through ongoing education.

Lifelong learning – attempts to accumulate capital

Education is one area where the search for recognition is most apparent. Osgood draws attention to the huge efforts that UK nursery staff put into gaining qualifications, despite the fact that 'the exchange value... of ECEC qualifications, in terms of economic capital and status is widely recognised as limited' (2012, p. 142). The limited benefits of early childhood qualifications that Osgood notes are the result of prior historical schemes of value around gender (Skeggs, 2004a), which mean that qualifications associated with child-rearing will automatically share in the low-value of this female-identified work.

Osgood's (2012) observation about childcare work and qualifications prompted me to look back at my own data, to see what ongoing education participants in this study had engaged in. Even though this was not a question within my interviews, and so I do not have complete data for all the participants, at least eleven out of the twenty-three workers had either just finished or were currently engaged in gaining a higher qualification. The lack of exchange value is just as much an issue for those working in Victorian childcare (Bretherton, 2010) as for UK nursery workers. Unlike some fields, workers do not earn more money as a result of holding a qualification – they only do so if they can then move into a position that requires such a qualification. Such positions are not always available in their current place of employment, and may require looking for work elsewhere. The financial incentive to make such a move is not strong. A report on the lives of low-paid workers observed about childcare workers and training that 'the minimal increase that they might gain would not compensate them for the time and money involved in achieving it.' (Masterman-Smith, et al., p. 13). If there is little financial incentive to do this work, then perhaps workers are doing so for other

reasons, and in the next chapter I look at how they attempt to challenge the material and cultural inequalities of the childcare field.

One of the ironies of the government's new workforce policy, mentioned earlier, which makes some level of qualifications mandatory, is that childcare workers may already be pushing themselves to the limit to get higher qualifications, without the government policy. So although the aim is to improve the quality of the field, the effect might actually be the opposite, exacerbating the existing problems with turnover in the field (LHMU - Childcare division, 2011). Mirjeta mentioned one such person who had been the mainstay of the small centre she works at, but has now left childcare work permanently;

> *Eunice's... yeah, she went over to England, and she wasn't trained, and that's the sad bit. She wasn't trained, and see, she's got to go and do her Cert III. And she hasn't got the confidence. Yet she was brilliant. And a lovelier person you'd never meet. So she's been out of it* (Mirjeta, 60s)

Mirjeta identifies a problem with government policy when it drives away colleagues who are good at what they too, particularly when dedicated employees are hard to find. Those participants who were involved in the focus group talked about this issue;

> *Dianne: But I don't know if it's um... if everyone's having the same experience, but we're finding it hard to actually employ people at the moment, that...*
>
> *Ondine: With the new ratios and having, needing more staff?*
>
> *Dianne: Yeah, but... not even getting candidates. Even through McArthur and Randstad* [large childcare employment agencies]*, looking for a full-time, diploma-trained worker, they're either... not leaving their current jobs... or... there's just no-one looking for work. I don't know, but... there's just... nothing, nothing out there.*
>
> *Abbie: It's like that at our place too...*

It is clear from other research (e.g., Bretherton, 2010) and from the full transcripts, that most childcare services are finding it hard to get applicants for positions advertised, and are having to be creative in sourcing new staff. Experienced workers are especially hard to find, it seems, without the pay and conditions that might keep them in the industry. The mismatch between high work-expectations and low rewards suggests the possibility of exploitation, and is a reminder of Walkerdine's (2003) understanding of education as a form of social control. As she suggests, 'we are certainly not witnessing any lessening of inequality or exploitation – far from it – but I would claim that this inequality is differently lived because low-paid manual and service workers are constantly enjoined to improve and remake themselves...' (Walkerdine, 2003, pp. 242-243). In the last section of this chapter, I look at workers' experience of exploitation, and their response to this situation.

Exploitation

Exploitation is not a word that is usually mentioned in the 'polite world' of early childhood education (Stonehouse, 1989). When talking about an occupation that has high expectations, high levels of responsibility, considerable workloads, and sometimes hazardous conditions

(contaminated bodily fluids, physical violence, heavy lifting) and is paid around the minimum wage, then this may be the most accurate word to use (Andrew & Newman, 2012).

The previous sections explored the lack of value that attaches to childcare work, such as the low pay, its dismissal as merely babysitting, and the shame that those in the field may experience, reflecting negative discursive constructions of the work. Coexisting with this lack of value are the high expectations of what childcare should be able to achieve, as evidenced in the attention paid to childcare in government policy in recent years (Australian Federal Government, 2010; Baird, 2008; Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011), and the expectations that workers will continue to upgrade their educational qualifications (Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012). Bourdieu (1996) discusses the ambiguity of academic qualifications. On one hand they tend to be overwhelmingly acquired by the most privileged, helping reproduce existing power structures, while on the other hand they offer the dominated 'one of the surest guarantees against unchecked exploitation' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 375). This guarantee does not seem to be working for childcare workers, and the following chapters will explore some of the reasons why.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a materialist feminist approach to exploitation suggests that discourses which aim to devalue particular groups arise to justify existing exploitation (Delphy & Leonard, 1992; McMahon, 1999). To observe that childcare work is not valued, financially, socially or culturally, is to confirm this exploitation, noting its necessary effects, rather than its cause. The exploitation exists because childcare is necessary work, that must be done by someone. Feminist scholars have long argued that this is gendered exploitation (e.g., Bubeck, 1995; Grace, 2001), usually occurring within households, a subject we will return to in chapter 7. This chapter looks at how this exploitation is also fundamentally classed, as a result of childcare becoming commodified, so that women can participate in the paid labour market. McDowell, in her analysis of the changing landscape of women's work, suggests that although exploitation of women doing childcare is common, 'relations of obligation, affection, and trust muddy the language of class struggle' (2008a, p. 160). This seems to be true for those who participated in this research, who usually preferred to frame their work in these terms, rather than focus on the potentially depressing reality of exploitation.

It is in the interests of governments and parent-users to pay as little as possible for childcare labour, because the involvement of so many women's participation within the labour market relies on it being 'affordable'. Decisions about such affordability are driven by the needs of the powerful, rather than the actual constraints of operating a childcare system (Andrew & Newman, 2012). I showed earlier that the childcare workforce is becoming increasingly skilled, and that workers invest significantly in their own learning. I suggest that, following Delphy and Leonard's (1992) arguments about women's domestic work, that no matter how

skilled these workers become, those skills will continue to be devalued, because others have a stronger investment in 'affordable' childcare than they do in recognition of the worth of childcare work (Bowman & Cole, 2009; Hill, et al., 2007; O'Connell, 2011). This was particularly apparent in the case of one worker in Osgood's (2012) research who talked about how little respect she got for her work, despite her two University degrees (including a Masters), ability to speak multiple languages and her fifteen years of experience in childcare.

Interviewees frequently talked about the intensification of their work, as well as how little the pay seemed to reflect its complexity. However they did not tend to describe it as exploitative. Nonetheless, viewed in the context of government demands for 'upskilling' and the ongoing lack of attention to remuneration issues, then exploitation seems a reasonable conclusion, if an unpalatable one.

Awareness of exploitation

Exploitation is one of those issues within the data that is hard to see, perhaps in part because workers cannot allow themselves to think about their work in this way. It seems as if the low pay and poor conditions of childcare work need to be accepted, in order to do the job cheerfully (Sayer, 2011b; see Ch.6). I had to be careful as I talked with the interviewees not to let my *reactions* to their stories of everyday exploitation make them feel worse about their working lives. This is one of those situations where, as noted in the methodology chapter, the silences about this issue in the data might reveal its significance, and reflect the difficulties of talking about it rather than its irrelevance (Opie, 1992).

There are times, despite this observation, where exploitation is obviously an issue. Anne describes her experience of working at a service that was badly mismanaged, and ultimately went bankrupt, despite having underpaid their employees in multiple ways;

> *Yes, lost wages, lost sick leave, lost, um... oh, they also took all of our long-service at... superannuation was never paid, so that was my first year of accumulating superannuation, which was for me, it was like, wow, this is independence, maybe, one day when I get older. Um... no, no, not happening. Sooo.... there were other people that lost an awful lot more than I did, because I was only there for a year, but other people lost holiday pay for a few years, because they hadn't taken any holidays, you know, a lotta stuff.* (Anne, 50s)

It is notable here that despite how bad an experience this was, Anne tries to minimise it by emphasising how much worse it was for others. While this reflects the care for other that is almost obligatory in childcare work, its effect is to dampen the anger that perhaps should be felt about such experiences.

At other times the exploitation isn't so stark, and in this example, Ondine seems to talk herself into a realisation of the unacceptability of how childcare functions, in this comment on how low pay affects her working life;

> *it certainly doesn't stop you from doing your job well.* [pause] *It might become... demotivating over years. So after a while of putting in everything you've got to give, you feel like, 'Well, bloody hell! I'm broke and I'm...'* [laughs] *you know, and it's like... so I guess, as a long term thing, it can be difficult* (Ondine, 30s)

I found that there was a lot of laughter in the interviews, often about some of the most difficult topics, which is a tribute to the resilience of many of the workers in the study (and the therapeutic effects of black humour). For Ondine it seems to be about recognition that she has let herself put up with the poor conditions of the job, despite the costs to her own financial security.

This is a reminder of the *de facto* subsidy that workers provide to employers and to parent-users, in the course of working for much less than such their skilled labour should deserve (Helburn & Howes, 1996; Hill, et al., 2007; Whitebook, 1999). As Pocock and Hill explain;

> *If childcare workers are exercising levels of skill and effort that are close to those of preschool teachers, they are currently subsidising child care costs to the tune of at least 15 per cent. This is an involuntary but significant level of subsidy by a group of low-paid workers who can little afford it* (2007, p. 31).

Along with the financial subsidy they make to the system, through systemic low wages, workers also shore it up through the unpaid additional hours they do (Bretherton, 2010). Jovanovic (2013) discussing the issue of retention of staff, noted how this was made more difficult by the pressure they feel to work much longer hours than they are paid, in order to fulfil all of their administrative work. A number of the participants referred to the extra hours they tended to put in, particularly when under pressure due to accreditation processes. So, for example, Samantha, who again makes the comparison between her previous work in the school system, and her current role in childcare, says;

> *I would say that as a teacher in schools I did many hours at home, at night and over the weekends. As a kinder teacher I found that I don't spend near as much time planning or resourcing, but feel there is some connection between this and the amount I am getting paid. So I guess those times where I have been asked to come in over a weekend or just felt it necessary, I have found more annoying as I was getting paid so little. I would estimate that over the year I have been in 5 times over the weekend. Which doesn't sound that much, but was certainly not paid for these.* (Samantha, 30s, Australian)

While childcare workers are not the only workers to put in additional unpaid hours, this is more commonly associated with high-paid occupations, such as early-career doctors or lawyers. Unlike these doctors and lawyers, research participants did not claim to work these extra hours in the expectation of higher rewards down the track. This combination of underpayment and the pressure to work unpaid hours of work are indicative of exploitation.

Implications of this exploitation

Skeggs (1997) talks about how awareness of being exploited can be counterbalanced by the feeling of being valued and needed by those being cared for. For many of her research

participants it seemed that this sense of validation is what provides the pay-off for otherwise difficult and underpaid work. Very similar processes seem to be going on for the workers in this research. They choose to focus on the meaningfulness of the work, rather than the difficulties and low pay. As Mirjeta puts it;

> *I think that all kids need to know that they do matter. Just walking past a child and fluffing his head... hair, and you know, saying something... Or, you'll be sitting, and they'll snuggle up to you... it's the best. It's worth more than the money...* [laughs] (Mirjeta, 60s, Swiss/English/Albanian-Australian)

That Mirjeta explicitly compares the emotional rewards to the lack of financial ones is a reminder of how aware these women are of their low pay, even while choosing to focus on other aspects of the work. To focus on feeling that the job is valuable is vital, I would argue, in compensating for the class-based shame that might otherwise be felt in doing such down-to-earth work. However it can undermine the need for resistance to this exploitation. As Dyer and her colleagues observe, 'The 'soft' rewards of caring act as partial compensation for low pay' (2008, p. 2031). They further suggest, drawing on the work of Folbre and Nelson (2000) that 'those involved in caring work are less likely to engage in certain types of industrial action, such as strikes, because of feelings of duty for their charges: the 'prisoner of love' dilemma' (2008, p. 2031). England makes a similar claim, talking specifically about the childcare workforce, arguing that;

> *These emotional bonds put care workers in a vulnerable position, discouraging them from demanding higher wages or changes in working conditions that might have adverse effects on care recipients. A kind of emotional hostage effect occurs* (2005, p. 390)

Certainly childcare workers become 'prisoners of love', or 'emotional hostages', when they subordinate their own financial needs out of concern for families. This was somewhat evident in this comment from Ruby, which is thrown into sharper relief knowing that she works at a centre located in one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Melbourne;

> *I think.... like when you get pay increases* [the statutory minimum-wage rise] *and things... you know, for the parents' paying for the child, and things like that, sometimes you get some parents commenting on it, maybe and you're like, 'well, I sort-of don't have anything to do with it, but...' you know, and I think you sort of just have to be like... reassure parents about what you're providing for their children...* (Ruby, 20s)

To be poorly paid enough to benefit from a minimum-wage increase, and then to feel the need to justify this to the (mostly wealthy) parents of the children you care for, raises serious questions. I was surprised that at least five of the workers in the study mentioned their concerns for parents' ability to pay fees (remember Brittany's comment from the start of the chapter; "I feel sorry for parents having to pay that much"), without connecting this to the effect on their own workplace's ability to pay them better wages. Although many parents might indeed struggle to pay fees, particular single mothers earning 'women's wages', I

suggest that workers themselves become prisoners of love when they privilege others' financial hardships over their own. This is far removed from taking industrial action for better pay, as Dyer and colleagues (2008) noted above. I have found only one example from around the world of childcare workers taking large-scale industrial action. In 2004 Scottish nursery nurses voted to go on strike, and did so for many months, despite the economic impact on themselves and their families (Gall, 2004). Their example would not inspire others to do the same, however. Despite the length and hardship of the strike the gains they made were limited, as the economic difficulties of long-term striking and the fragmented nature of the workforce took its toll.

'Choice' and exploitation

Given the existence of such exploitation within childcare settings, not just in Australia, but also across other countries, it raises the question of why these women continue to do this work. It can be tempting to see childcare workers as the ultimate in docile workforces (Foucault, 1977), and indeed some have argued that women have become the archetypal exploitable workforce within modern capitalist societies (Adkins, 1995). To see those in childcare as a docile workforce, however, is to misunderstand the classed and gendered constraints under which women take up childcare work. Those who participated in the study have all chosen to work in the field, as is clear from their engagement with their work, but these choices are shaped strongly by both the availability of such work, for women, and also the gendered discourses that make such a choice 'natural' and socially sanctioned (Cameron, Mooney, & Moss, 2002).

A number of the participants talked about how easy it was to 'fall into' childcare work, because it was readily available;

> *I was not doing anything, um... and was at a bit of a loose end, I guess, with what I was going to do next, and... saw an ad in a paper, for... um, six-day pre-vocational childcare course, and it was free, and I just... I don't know what, I was just looking for something... interesting, and I just did it...* (Ondine, 30s, Anglo-Australian)

> *I sort-of fell into the job, I was at a point in my life where I was at Uni for fashion, and I just hated that because it wasn't what I thought it was going to be, and then just walked up the road to the child care centre, and yeah, just had a chat to the director, and said... 'Was there any jobs?' uhhm, and it went from casual to full-time within... the space of about a week* (Abbie, 20s, Australian)

> *it was really just an opportunity, it wasn't a choice, but then I think every job I've got into has kind-of... just something that happened, and just happened to work and I liked it, so... you know, but that's, that's my experience, probably not the average person's experience.* (Dianne, 40s, Italian-Australian)

These sort of 'accidental' career paths are always constrained by what is imaginable for those contemplating the work, and the expectations of employers who will be doing the hiring. For young men, work in places like childcare will not be suggested nor seem

imaginable to them, whereas for young women who find themselves as a loose end childcare jobs are readily available.

That these are gendered choices is clear when participants talked about why childcare seemed like a possibility, and noted their previous experiences with children, and the explicit encouragement to try it out. So Abbie, above, did not just happen to enquire at the childcare – there was a history behind it;

> *Mum just suggested, 'you know, there's a childcare up the road, why don't you just go and have a chat?' and for ages I was just, 'No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Don't need to do that.' Having no idea, really. Like I knew the idea of it, but, you know... how it'd be beautiful playing with children and ra-ra* (Abbie, 20s, Australian)

Even though Abbie was resistant to the idea, both the gendered naturalness of such word for women as well as the easy availability of the work have now lead to an extended length of time in the field.

Similarly, for Lauren, there was some resistance, but both her life experiences and encouragement from others, lead her to try and childcare work;

> *it must have been, because... my Mom was home with me... doing home daycare... mostly through school. Actually she went in and did youth groups, and Sunday school class stuff, and I started baby-sitting my siblings and cousins, and then around the... the neighbourhoods. But then I started doing the church nursery, and... stuff as well, and I... started college only to do an art degree, everybody kept saying, 'You could do, you could be a teacher!' And I was like,* [emphatic] *'I do not want to get into teaching. I refuse to be a teacher.' And I went to, on an art degree, and studied studio arts, and drawing, sculpture and... decided that... I was living on campus, next to the daycare, and it just kind-of fell in my lap, hey, I could do this on the side... and just discovered that my passion was just as high to work with these kids as it was to do the art* (Lauren, 30s)

Lauren's experience here shows classing processes at work, and the ways that they intersect inextricably with gender. She was studying at University, and was encouraged to study to be a school teacher, a job with a higher classed status than childcare. Yet her experience as a young woman, discursively constructed as willing and able to care for children, lead to her taking up childcare work, and so experiencing the classed lack of value that comes with this feminised and dirty work.

For some their choice of this work has flowed directly from their responsibilities as mothers, as Anne's experience makes clear;

> *I started working in childcare, by accident. And this is really weird... you see, because my daughter had a growth hormone deficiency, which meant she didn't grow. When she was three years old I knew the benefit of her going to a three-year old kinder, but she still had, like, um... a size that big, her fontanelle hadn't closed over yet, and I was somewhat anxious about her heading off to childcare, or to a... it was a neighbourhood house, a three-year old group at the neighbourhood house, and because I was anxious to let her go, she was my little baby, smaller in size and stature and everything, I thought well, I'll put my name down to be the assistant, and then I didn't have to pay fees, I could be there all the time but make out that I wasn't really over-protective. Um, and no-one put their name down for the leader, and so*

> *they bumped the assistant up to the leader, and suddenly I found I was the leader of a three-year old playgroup, and I didn't know what to do.* (Anne, 50s)

For Anne, work in childcare was an accidental result of her concern for her daughter, and the expense of playgroup fees. Bubeck (1995) sees a vicious circle at work in this particular process of gendered exploitation. (Young) women are expected to care for children, and as they do so, they learn to see the value of care, making it harder to choose *not* to care, which is the mechanism that Bubeck (1995) identified as central to this form of exploitation.

The choices made by participants, above, have been about the ease of getting work in childcare, the pull-factors of this particular work for women. Sometimes, as the experience of one participant shows, a different gendered dynamic is at work;

> *I think... like I always felt interested in criminology, but I did psychology because I liked childhood behaviour, but to do psychology, eventually, is quite expensive, because you need to pretty much get a Masters, to get employed properly... So that's why I followed it in criminology, but then um... growing up with such a strict... criminal justice system in Singapore, and... they've got the death penalty, and caning and everything, so I think... when I started... I, I finished Uni, and I started getting jobs, and then... just thinking about it, and actually working in prison systems, or things like that, I couldn't really... agree with, I found it a bit hard... I just, err... went to work with children with autism, and then went into childcare, so that's how I got there...* (Serene, 30s)

It seems that the sorts of environments Serene was able to work in, given her choice of education, were not very comfortable places to work as a woman, due to gender discrimination in the corrective services field. In addition, monetary constraints were at issue, this time in the high cost of education in the field she had hoped to work in. In the end, and this may in part be due to the losses of capital experienced by most migrants to Australia (Hage, 2000), she has found work in childcare. Though just one experience, it suggests that the choice to work in childcare is also shaped by push-factors, where many jobs, such as this prison work, remain difficult environments for female workers.

Acknowledging exploitation

Rather than seeing those in childcare as a uniformly docile workforce, it is important to notice the internal tensions in the field, between those who remain engaged with their work, and those who seem to have decided that the rewards do not justify the effort. There are a significant group of disengaged workers who struggle to stay committed to work that is valued so little. Bretherton (2010) describes these two distinct groups of workers in terms of 'flight' or 'fight'; drawing a contrast between those who leave out of dissatisfaction, and those core of workers who chose to stay and 'fight'. This ignores those who do neither of these, but remain in childcare despite their recognition of the difficulties.

I want to suggest that both the high turnover of the field, and the disengagement *within* the workforce, constitute evidence of the awareness by workers of the exploitative nature of the field. Mohanty, looking at the situation of marginalised female workers around the globe,

raises the important question, 'How do women understand their own positions and construct meanings in an exploitative job situation?' (2003, p. 154). For the workers in her study, they saw themselves not as docile but as people with agency, able to hop between jobs or take on extra work, in order to gain some advantage in a job market that was stacked against them. Although those working in childcare in Australia are relatively privileged compared to the majority-world workers Mohanty describes, similar strategies are in evidence.

Abbie observes how widespread the discontent is at her workplace;

> *in the last... week or two, I've had conversations with... most people at work, and most of them aren't happy. And... I don't know if it's just that particular place, or if it's the industry, but I think most people are looking for a change next year. Which is scary... when it's... out of, say, twelve people, probably eight... are wanting to... move on somewhere... to a different industry, or whatever* (Abbie, 20s)

While not all these workers will actually leave the workplace, it shows a willingness to move, even if it is within the childcare field, in order to secure some advantage, such as better pay, or more planning time. A number of interviewees talked about the work they did on the side, usually casual minding of children, including Abbie herself, seeing this as a way to compensate for the low pay of their fulltime work. This is one way to resist docility.

Recalcitrance, not docility

There are important connections to be made here with what Skeggs has called,

> *the habitus of recalcitrance, of non-belonging, of no-caring, those who refuse to make a virtue out of necessity, the 'f*** off' and 'so what' of utterances, the radical emptiness of the habitus, one that does not want to play the dominant symbolic game and accrue any value* (2004c, p. 89)

As she explains it, this recalcitrance expresses the frustration and resentment felt by those who are exploited within classed systems. The frustration comes from recognising the constraints that often prevent them from being able to do much about this exploitation. Many of those who work in childcare have little distance from necessity, and cannot afford to give up this fundamentally-available form of work, even if they are finding their jobs unbearable.

None of the interviewees talked about themselves as recalcitrant. This is hardly surprising. The 'non-caring' of the recalcitrant worker implies that they are doing the bare minimum within their job, and these individuals are unlikely to voluntarily give up their own time to talk to a researcher. The self-selection process of participants within ethically-based research frequently results in cohorts who are more advantaged or motivated than the group being researched (Blackmore & Hutchinson, 2010; Lawler, 2000). It is possible to see this recalcitrance through the eyes of other workers, however. Participants did talk freely about the disengagement by both co-workers and former co-workers. Mirjeta, who has experienced her own struggles to stay engaged in childcare, has this to say about her younger workmates;

> *...it does, with the young ones... they go into childcare, they think it's going to be... easy. And as you know, it's complex. It's not easy, and... they'll let others do it... They've sort-of lost their enthusiasm and their energy, but they'll say, "oh well, but they don't pay us much". So, okay, we only work to what, the value they give us, and that's how I'm seeing it.* (Mirjeta, 60s)

Mirjeta explicitly identifies the lack of motivation with the lack of wider value in society, and how some workers choose to do only this bare minimum.

This recalcitrance causes a fault-line to open up within childcare, between those who cannot let themselves just do the minimum and who get frustrated at those who don't seem to want to pull their weight. There is a sense of incomprehension about those who are less motivated;

> *...it's more staff... stuff that... does my head in, because I feel like... and that's where I feel bad too, that I feel everything should just be... commonsense, like, 'how do you not know this? You work in childcare.' You've done this for, I don't know, a couple of years as well, and then, why is it just working out to me, and not to you. That's what I struggle with.* (Abbie, 20s, Australian)

Abbie thinks it is 'commonsense' to work hard, and certainly many employers expect this. However given the levels of disaffection that were talked about during the interviews, among workers across all levels of qualification in the field, it seems that the most commonsense approach may actually be recalcitrance, in response to an inchoate sense of the exploitation that they experience.

Andrea is one of the most interesting respondents in this regard, as one of the additional interview participants recruited from workers intending to leave the field. She is explicit about all the problems she sees with childcare work,

> *Um, probably the number one thing that it is underpaid, it's an underpaid industry, yeah, and um... probably second... probably most the thing I've seen out there is... just the support from... the management... just overall... yeah, sort-of lack of, lack of support, and I suppose resources would be another thing, I suppose.*
>
> *So, just um... providing... the right assistance and, and um... you know, err... you know somewhere where someone can turn to know that they're, they're totally valued as a worker, or whatever, you know?*
>
> *It's mentally... challenging, as well as physically challenging. Definitely mentally challenging because now you have... statistics are growing higher and higher with children with learning difficulties and behavioural... difficulties, and um... so... you know, and if, if the child, children, are taking... being taken along, longer to be assessed, and um... which causes pressure on staff, because there's not, the additional staffing's not there, and all this sort of stuff. So yeah, lots of pressure that's, um... on top of it, yeah. But yeah, obviously, seeing as we're child care workers we're obviously not... qualified to be intervention teachers, but yeah... we're out there doing that role.*

Andrea feels frustration about the lack of support, financially and emotionally, for workers, as well as the increasing work pressures. Again, like Mirjeta earlier, she makes the connection to the need to be valued, and how it is hard to stay motivated when this sense of value is not apparent.

She talks candidly about why she wants to leave this line of work;

> *I'm... thinking I'm sort-of coming to the end of actually working in the industry... as far as that goes and I've think I've had enough now, you know? So I'm looking at redirecting myself, I'm not sure what yet, but um... but yeah I just sort-of feel that, um... I don't think it's bringing me... I don't think I'm... as much as I know... I'm not blowing my own trumpet but I've been told that, you know, I, I show initiative and competency and all that sort-of stuff, but at the same time it's great people telling me that, but at the end of the day, I think I've... had enough of the working environment, you know? because I've probably seen all these things out there, you know, teams not connecting, and... and competency levels of other people, and all that sort of stuff, you know, I think that's what really brings you down as a worker.*

Andrea can see the problems with the work, including the low pay and lack of management support, and these things have brought her to a point where the job is simply too hard to keep on doing, without any sense of recognition of her value. Despite her awareness of all these issues, when she tries to pinpoint the reason, the most immediate focus for her frustration is the difficulties in working with her co-workers, particularly if they do not seem to know what they are doing.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter how workers in childcare experience low pay, difficult working conditions, as well as a widespread lack of respect for what they do. I have shown the ways that this impacts upon them, in terms of the lack of respect - and sometimes shame - that they feel about the work that they do, despite their own sense of its value.

I have argued that this combination of factors, both material and discursive, constitutes exploitation, even though this exploitation is not explicitly acknowledged by those being interviewed. My focus in this chapter has been on the economic aspects of this exploitation, in the sense of the classed lack of value attributed to the menial work of childcare. When talking about childcare work, however, these classed inequalities cannot be separated from their gendered origins. Bubeck (1995) shows how women are encouraged to take on responsibility for others, and to feel a sense of care and empathy. Through dominant discourses of gender that provide models of who women or men should be, responsibilities for caring come to seem naturally part of women's role, and increase the likelihood that women's choices will be limited to exploited and devalued work (Perales, 2013).

Women are encouraged to work in childcare as a result of their gender, but in doing so they become subject to classed inequality, through the low (economic and cultural) value that attaches to all caring work. To question why childcare workers appear not to recognise their own exploitation is to ignore that this type of exploitation is already naturalised for women, through the roles they perform within the home. Thus Sayer notes the irony that 'For many women, entering the labour market – commodifying their labour power – freed them from worse circumstances in the home' (Sayer, 1999, p. 66). Recalling Mohanty's (2003) arguments about the agency that exploited female workers can nonetheless exercise, this

observation allows us to see that a better question might be to ask not what they lose, but what women may gain from working in the childcare field.

Chapter 6: Worthwhile work

Introduction

In the last chapter I argued that childcare work is shaped by its low economic value within the field of power. Not only are the wages low but there is a widely-held cultural belief that this is a job for those without better prospects. I discussed how these beliefs impact on the class relations that staff enter into when engaging in this work, which are affected by the low value of women's work more generally. Workers perceive the low worth of childcare work to others, and sometimes feel a sense of shame about being considered little more than babysitters. I showed that the economic relations of childcare are exploitative, with high expectations of quality work and increasing levels of education and training, with minimal compensation in either money or respect. I argued that constructing particular activities as worthless makes the people who do them easier to exploit, because they come to share in the belief that they deserve no greater material or cultural recognition. Nonetheless some sense of the exploitation remains, with some interviewees contemplating leaving the field as a result, and observing that some of their co-workers respond to feeling exploited by doing as little as possible.

It can be difficult to understand why anyone in the childcare workforce remains motivated, given the low pay, poor working conditions and lack of respect. This chapter explores this puzzling phenomenon, asking what enables workers to engage, and what the consequences of this might be. I argue that workers respond to this lack of value by investing in themselves as respectable and responsible individuals. The skills generated by this investment become embodied as a form of subcultural capital, which provides them with an alternate sense of worth to the low external valuations of childcare work.

Skegg's (1997) study of women doing caring work provides the foundation for my arguments about subcultural capital in this chapter. She shows how women, particular those from marginalised locations in social space, contest assumptions about their (lack of) value, by investing in themselves as respectable and responsible individuals. This is a strategic and ethical choice designed to achieve a sense of worth within a classed and gendered society which values particular forms of capital that are difficult to accrue from particular locations in social space. Skeggs explains that for those without much symbolic capital or power, 'ethical struggles often occur around use rather than exchange-values' (2004a, p. 185). Excluded communities will therefore invest in particular forms of subcultural capital, which do not privilege the exchange-value of those practices - which may be marginal - but their use and value to their community.

This subcultural capital is the set of skills and dispositions of *the committed worker*. Participants in this study have a collective vision of this worker – a working model – but the

vision goes unnamed, making it more difficult to mobilise around. The difficulty of seeing and naming what they value is, I argue, a result of material and discursive domination. In this chapter I contrast this subcultural capital with the forms of capital that are legitimated within the childcare field, namely, the educational and social capital associated with professionalism. These legitimated forms of capital represent the aspirations and ideas of a very different location in social space than that of most workers – one that takes for granted the accessibility of professional, high-value work. This chapter explores the logic of these two different capital-accumulation strategies, and how they are embedded in the values held by those from different locations in social space.

I finish the chapter by returning to the subject of resistance, showing that committed workers do resist their own exploitation, though not in the same way as the disengaged workers in Chapter 5. They find ways to express their dissatisfaction while still honouring their work and its value. Sometimes this manifests as a mismatch between their perceptions of how they believe childcare should be, and the legitimated discourses of the childcare field. Occasionally this leads to subversion of the accepted schemes of value within the field, and an affirmation of workers' own subcultural capital instead.

Becoming the committed worker

The lack of value of childcare work has many consequences. One of these is that the lived experiences of workers have remained largely invisible, and so have not been the subject of much research, as others have noted (Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002; Foster, 1993). Osgood's (2006b, 2010, 2012) work is an exception, and she explores thoughtfully the ways childcare workers have struggled to value their class- and gender-inflected work within discourses of professionalism. This chapter builds on Osgood's work, asking whether investing in legitimated forms of capital, such as those valued within professionalism (e.g., university education, professional networks) has been of benefit to those within the field. It also draws inspiration from Murray (1998, 2000, 2001) whose insights into the gendered power relations of the childcare field have helped shape my understanding of the struggles that workers experience in articulating the meaning of the work for themselves. As she observes, 'The social and cultural messages surrounding the work of child caregiving are... internalized by child care workers and reflected in the meanings they inscribe to their caregiving activities' (Murray, 1998, p. 151).

In this section I explore the cultural messages that workers must negotiate in engaging in this work, and tease out the classed and gendered logic that drives these women's investment in themselves as committed workers. Though constrained by their location in social space, they actively engage in choosing this line of work, and then making it their own. Although they cannot control the perceptions of childcare's value within the field of power, I maintain that their actions continue to shape the field in significant ways.

Respectability

Skeggs' (1997) ethnography of eighty-three women undertaking care-work courses in the UK articulates the role that respectability comes to play in how they think about and direct their lives. She draws on Finch's (1993) historical analysis of the construction of 'the working class' in Australia, which shows how the concept of respectability was used to discipline the lower orders, by making moral judgements about their worth or otherwise, especially in relation to women. Women do not undertake carework just because it is available. Rather it is a strategy that enables them to cast themselves not as 'low class' (bad) women, but as caring, hardworking and fundamentally-respectable citizens[20]. Sayer (2007) explains the shame that drives women to recast themselves in this way, and argues that their choice to do so indicates the value they see in what they lack, not simply how it will aid them in getting work. Knowing that all social actors engage in some level of reflexivity about their lives means that a person's emerging understanding of how they are classed within society becomes a factor in how they respond to those classing practices, such as these women taking up respectability (Skeggs, 1997). Bourdieu (1984) sees respectability as an important aspect of social capital, underlining its place in our sense of our relationships with others. I understand respectability as being about an individual's attempt to shift the perceptions of those in their wider social circle about their own classed limitations and possibilities.

This search for respectability seemed to be important to the workers in this study as well. Samantha, when talking about how important it was to her sense of self to be seen as an 'educated professional' said;

> *I think that... would be.... a really big thing for me... I think by.... being out there so that they can see who and what you are... I think we would find that we would be getting more respect.* (Samantha, 30s)

The 'they' she refers to is not defined, but it illustrates how the search for respectability is usually about others' opinions (Sayer, 2005; see Ch.7). This sense of 'respect' is not about Samantha's individual needs but about childcare workers' collective struggle for respect, as her use of 'we' suggests. This type of respect is what Sennett (2003) calls social respect, which is about relations with others, contrasting it with personal forms of respect, such as the self-respect that comes from believing what you are doing is worthwhile. To see respect as merely an individual phenomenon is to ignore how it is located within relationships of power. Workers' ability to get respect - from parents that use their service, or those within their own social networks - depends in part on perceptions of the value of what they do, and thus their value as members of society.

Anne, another participant in the research, is explicit about how her identity as a person depends on how she is valued within her work;

> *I just... felt relieved to be able to write out a resignation letter to say, 'I've been invited to join another centre.' To say, hey, I'm of worth. That someone else wants me, that I don't have to feel as downtrodden as I do in this place, or as worthless.* (Anne, 50s)

Anne's work at a childcare service with poor morale and unsupportive management made her more able to acknowledge that as a worker she felt worthless. Her struggle in her working life has been to find a different sort of workplace where she can feel worthwhile, as the life-story she described in her interview showed.

Although the notion of respectability that Skeggs (1997) identified is important, and represents a search for value within relationships of class, I want to focus on another aspect that participants in my study discussed more often - responsibility. Although childcare is a respectable job, and so sought out for that reason, it is even more clearly a job that requires a significant amount of responsibility.

Responsibility

Although respectability is predominantly about our worth in the eyes of others, responsibility seems much more about our worth in our own eyes. As childcare workers, the responsibility that is felt most strongly is that of responsibility to the young children being cared for, and about half of participants discussed some aspect of this. For example;

> *I think I underestimated, again, the responsibility of the job... um... then as I got my training and worked more, in the rooms.... and understood the job better... then, you know, I think... we do a fantastic job... I'm really proud of the industry...* (Dianne, 40s)

I have suggested that respectability is about women's experience of classed judgements. Responsibility, I argue, seems more about judgements based on gender, given women's supposedly natural orientation towards child-rearing (Bubeck, 1995). Yet the ideas are intertwined, so being responsible is embedded in ideas about respectability, in terms of the self-respect that is generates, which can counteract others' negative value-judgements.

This sense of responsibility comes through clearly across the interviews, and represents the sort of motivating force that Sayer (2011b) calls 'commitments'. These involve;

> *a more conscious and normative relation to things; some mainly invoke a sense of duty, some more a sense of love.... They usually emerge gradually and partly unintentionally, through continued immersion in relationship and activities, so that they become embodied, and come to involve us.* (Sayer, 2011b, pp. 124-125)

In this quote Sayer (2011b) is critiquing Bourdieu's concept of habitus, because he sees it as over-emphasising structure at the expense of agency. Both habitus and commitments are embodied, and both may be shaped by a person's location in social space. I maintain that it devalues childcare workers to see their responsibility as unreflexive, and argue that workers are much more active in realising these dispositions than is usually believed (Colley, et al., 2003). Workers choose to take up responsibility on a daily basis. This was apparent in the previous chapter when workers saw themselves as doing much more than basic care.

Commitment to the work is a result of immersion in relations with children and families, and that becomes more meaningful over time.

The responsibility felt by childcare workers echoes that felt by parents for their own children, but extends to a much larger and more diverse group. Serene explains the complexity of this task;

> *I mean, for my room, it's understanding... twenty-six different personalities on the one day... so... and adapting to all of them at the same time. And you're really observing and planning, and sometimes it's not just the program, but behaviours, like, you've gotta think quicker than what the child's doing, to help protect them... all the time.* (Serene, 30s)

This aspect of the job is often normalised by workers as well as all those using the service. These are very young children, only just learning to take care of their own needs (unlike the relatively more capable children within the school system), and so the responsibilities are significant.

At times it can be a burden to feel so responsible for children, as Dianne suggests;

> *People who leave, leave disillusioned, either because of the conditions of childcare, the hours and the pay, um... the responsibility of it becomes overwhelming for some people. So they come in... especially young girls who've done a traineeship thinking it's all fun, and they realise that it's actually quite... even though you, your time with the children can be fun, the responsibility of it is overwhelming when something goes wrong, and they've got to, a... talk to a parent about... a child being injured, or um... a child that's got a developmental problem, and then you've got to talk a parent through, and you see all that trauma... for some people that's too overwhelming.... and they leave the industry, because, you know, the stress and the pressure.* (Dianne, 40s)

Despite its sometimes-overwhelming nature, I believe that for those who do not end up leaving, responsibility becomes a defining characteristic of who they are, that validates their worth to themselves.

Through exercising reflexivity about their worth within society, women who choose to work in childcare do so partly to remedy their perceived lack of value (Habibis & Walter, 2009; Skeggs, 1997). They learn to embody respectability and responsibility, which underpins the dedication that is characteristic of committed workers. These workers have a vision of what qualities constitute the ideal worker and colleague, as well as a sense of those that do not.

Committed worker practices and subcultural capital

I locate the concept of 'the committed worker' within a Bourdieusian framework, as a form of subcultural capital (Bullen & Kenway, 2005). This positions the ideal of the committed worker within the struggles of the childcare field, the struggle over which capitals will have value within the field. As Bourdieu observes, using the metaphor of a card game;

> *just as the relative value of cards changes with each game, the hierarchy of the different species of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) varies across the various fields. In other words, there are cards that are valued, efficacious in all fields*

> *– these are the fundamental species of capital – but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field.* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98)

The government, through the regulatory and administrative bodies that govern childcare, explicitly views increased qualifications as *the* form of cultural capital, necessary for delivery of high-quality programs (see, for example; Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012). Meanwhile the history of childcare services tells us that what has traditionally been valued as capital has been an essentialised notion of 'motherhood' (Ailwood, 2008; Osgood, 2012). My research shows that interviewees have their own sense of what is valuable - the committed worker. To call the practices of 'the committed worker' a form of *subcultural* capital, is to acknowledge that these constitute a resource that it not universally recognised as such within the field. While certain workers invest in this form of capital, and many managers seem to respect and value that investment, such subcultural capital is by no means a universally accepted idea within the childcare field, and lacks any recognition in the field of power. The idea of subcultural capital has much in common with 'community cultural capital', an idea from critical race theory (Yosso, 2005). The latter is a useful reminder of the collective valuation at the heart of all capitals. Any capital reflects the value of a particular resource to an identifiable community of people - in this case, a specific subset of the childcare field. Bullen and Kenway describe how they mobilise this concept with the young women they studied;

> *The cultural, social and symbolic capitals they deploy have currency within their social groupings, providing resources and strategies for survival in the classroom and the schoolyard, indeed, for surviving the positional suffering they experience there* (2005, pp. 52-53)

Similarly, I argue that certain workers invest in particular practices that have value within the childcare field, and they do so to alleviate the 'positional suffering' that comes from being positioned as 'just babysitters'. This is especially important for those within the field ('unqualified' workers) who do not have access to more valued forms of capital. It is worth noting that these practices are not something that can be taken up simply or easily, but constitute embodied qualities or skills that have accumulated over time through the daily practice of childcare work.

Of course any subcultural capital is also capital, but capital whose exchange-value is currently minimal, as shown by the low-wages and limited respect that even committed workers accrue in this job. However, as Skegg's (2004c) more recent work has underlined, exchange-value represents only the value of capitals to others. For the women themselves, who see the use-value in becoming a committed worker, such investments continue to seem worthwhile.

Naming the unnamed – The qualities of the committed worker

This committed worker becomes the yardstick against which workers measure their performance, and that of others. In the previous chapter I showed how some interviewees judged those who failed to live up to these standards, even if that failure constitutes a 'rational' response to the low value accorded to the work. Analysing data from the interviews, the committed worker embodies a number of key qualities. They are; a team-player, hard-working, down-to-earth, practical, able to stand their ground, stoic in the face of unpleasant tasks, and emotionally insightful.

Teamwork

The quality expressed most frequently was the ability to work well with others, because of the demands of the job, even at the best of times. Interview participants frequently emphasised the need to work closely and supportively;

> *it would be like the skill to work in a team, the ability to work in a team...* (Samantha, 30s)

> *...probably the team I work in... I think the... centre that we have and the people that work there, we're all like... on the same kind-of level, and um... just joke around with each other, and we're very comfortable with each other, it's like a family there, so... I guess that's important as well, to when you work in a centre that... like we have disagreements, but we still come back to the same page* (Serene, 30s)

> *Commonsense... confidence... Being able to work in a team... um... assertiveness...* (Andrea, 30s)

Andrea's comment is a reminder, not just of the importance of teamwork, but of the values of commonsense and practicality, a down-to-earth spirit, that is highly prized by those in the field.

Practical wisdom

Many scholars have talked about the importance of practical wisdom – the experience and insight acquired through practical and long-term engagement in an activity – and its often-unrecognised contribution to the expertise of workers (Aubrey, 2011; Bourdieu, 1990a; Sayer, 2011b; Wilkinson, 2005). Many of the research participants focused on the importance of such practical wisdom within childcare, often describing it as 'commonsense', and contrasted it with the abstract knowledge gained through formal study. Practical wisdom is gained 'on the job', through trial and error, and through attentiveness to the accumulated knowledge of others, as Mirjeta suggests;

> *That has come as a life... learning, not as a... as a book. The... you know, you can do so much out of a book... I do believe you can only do so much out of a book. You've gotta get the rest, practical.... And I know of a girl who... has her kindergarten certificate, she's a diploma.... she will only work as a Cert III because she's got no confidence. And I feel sad for her, because she's not even a good Cert III. You know, it just makes me sad... that... okay, she's gone through all these things, and she still hasn't learnt.* (Mirjeta, 60s)

Mirjeta expresses a common concern that what is taught in vocational courses and in universities about childcare work is often not particularly helpful on the job. Sayer (2011b) argues that practical wisdom is a particularly important skill in relational work, which cannot be reduced to a set of technical competencies - although many early childhood courses and accreditation programs attempt to do. Mirjeta is drawing attention to the frequent disparities between the requirements of the job, and the training that childcare workers receive.

The subcultural capital of the committed worker is a product of intimate daily knowledge of the job, and can differ markedly from what has been learnt in their formal training (Vincent & Braun, 2010, make a similar observation). Even though childcare courses usually discourage students from saying 'no' to children, emphasising 'positive' disciplinary strategies, Mia has come to her own conclusions;

> *I just think, parents are so good nowadays at answering every single question in such detail, and I think, 'You know what, that was a really, that was a question of, like, a "no" question.' Why? Because it just is that way.* (Mia, 40s, Greek)

For Mia, as for other committed workers, there are some situations in which to say 'no' to children seems obvious. The child may be in danger, or has misunderstood or ignored an attempt at redirection. Her reference to parents should be noted, as the next chapter explores some of the tensions that can exist between workers and parents.

Some participants were emphatic in their interviews about their hard-won knowledge about children, including the occasional need for hard truths;

> *You know why? It teaches you that you're not going to win at everything. You're not going to be good at everything. You're not going to get a sticker for everything, and... some things are competitive, and it doesn't mean you're a failure if you don't win at that, you might be good at something else. But... I think giving kids the idea that there are no winners and losers, and it's all about the game – it's nice in theory, but not with everything.* (Dianne, 40s)

Dianne here is articulating a frustration with some of the 'softness' that seems to be expected of childcare workers – that expectation that we can (and will) shield children from all the difficult things in life. As Marie explains;

> *You know it doesn't mean that life is always a breeze, and I do often say to families, 'It's okay if your child is finding a situation difficult. We learn from challenges. If everything is easy, all the time, you don't learn anything.* (Marie, 40s)

This practicality, and the willingness to be honest about the realities of life, seems to be important to workers, but it is balanced with a compassion, an insight into the difficulties of life.

Heart, and spine!

Empathy for others is an important skill in childcare work, and is usually felt on behalf of children. However fellow workers and even parents often struggle too, and the committed

worker is usually willing to make efforts on their behalf as well. Rachel and Julie talk about their experiences of supporting colleagues;

> *it's the same with any co-worker, if you notice that they're having a bad day, you kind-of recognise it straight off the bat in the morning, that, that they're not going so well, so... you need to do something extra to help them along the way...* (Julie, 30s)

> *I have so much respect for this person, she's just... she's had such a tough life... but her passion for children is... oh, I don't know, if, if she was just given that confidence I could see her doing really great things... um... and I've discovered she's a real natural leader, she doesn't realise she is, but she is...* (Rachel, 40s)

This emotional insight into people and relationships is a valued skill within the field, and represents an aspect of being the committed worker that I will return to in Chapter 8. Though this empathy is more commonly felt on behalf of colleagues (underlining the point about teamwork), workers also show this compassionate side to parents. Lea explains her approach to communicating with parents;

> *we know the blunt answer in our hearts, but... the way where we communicate it to parents... we're always meant to be positive... so... um... yeah, I do pick my words carefully when I talk to parents... and then there are times when you have certain parents who have different personalities, and you can be very honest with them, and you can laugh about it, and it'll be okay* (Lea, 20s)

It is clearly not that childcare workers are 'naturally' considerate – often they may want to be blunt – but their emotional insight makes them willing to moderate what they want to say. This empathetic work is a fundamental part of women's taking up of responsibility (Walkerdine, 1986).

While many normalise such empathy within workplaces devoted to caring for children, this should not be taken-for-granted. This is a valued capacity for the committed worker, but it is guided by a fierce sense of who might be in need of such empathy, and is not simply about 'making nice'. So there are times - such as when workers are not being treated with respect - that toughness needs to be shown, and this is just as significant an attribute of these workers. Jade recalls one of those times;

> *...parents would come like this, and they'll shout and they'll yell... and then we have to be a little bit strong-headed... calm but strong-headed... to get things done...* (Jade, 30s)

For Abbie, she had to show that toughness in excluding a still-infectious child, despite an angry father demanding the child be allowed to attend;

> *you kind-of just think, well I've gotta do... my job, and this is just one of the harder parts of doing it. You've got to stand up for people who can't stand up for themselves, which are, like, the other kids in the room...* (Abbie, 20s)

The toughness is about surviving an environment that can be very stressful. It is stressful for parents in trusting others with their children, and for workers in taking on that responsibility. It is part of the practical wisdom necessary to do a job where hard decisions are sometimes

required, and the needs of different children and parents must be weighed up against each other.

Showing the insight that I believe is a key asset of the committed worker, Anne explains her personal philosophy about childcare work;

> *I think... that treating people with dignity and respect, and non-judgementally... and just... recognising that life's tricky, for everybody, at different levels. I think that... so... yeah... that's the equal footing, rather than the one up-one down thing* (Anne, 50s)

For Anne, it seems to come down to respect and dignity, the acknowledgment that everyone should be valued, regardless of their role within the centre or their background as a parent. Anne's centre, in a low-income area, is characterised by high-levels of welfare dependency, which is why dignity becomes so important in this context (Sayer, 2005). Anne's insight into the vulnerabilities of those she works with - parents as well as children - makes her very careful about how she treats others, and the assumptions she makes about them.

Falling short of the mark

Just as the participants in the research had a clear vision of what the committed worker looks like, they also recognise those who don't match up to the vision. The recalcitrant co-workers that interviewees described in the previous chapter, who do the minimum possible, remain a source of frustration and puzzlement for those who invest in doing it well. Participants reflected during the focus group on the frustrations of working with these disengaged colleagues, in the context of the low expectations that wider society has of childcare work;

> *Abbie: I love my job, but it just... it's so apparent when you're working with someone, that just... isn't feeling it.*
>
> Ondine: *Why would you want to do it, if you're not feeling it? It's not easy...*
>
> Abbie: *And it's a job that you can't do without emotion and without having your heart in it... well, you don't do it for the money!*
>
> Marie: *I think you also need to look at why they are particular people in the field – that people get counselled into... early childhood, and there seems to be a whole...*
>
> Ondine: *Centrelink suggests people to go into childcare that can't get a job!*
>
> Dianne: *I was going to say... it's kind-of like a...*
>
> Ondine: *Someone, a woman from our work, was working in a factory, and got fired, and they said, 'Why don't you go into childcare! And she's.... not doing well.*
>
> Abbie: *I can imagine...*
>
> Dianne: *Because it... traditionally it hasn't been promoted as... a career choice, or a... you know, you haven't finished your schooling, you didn't get to Year Twelve, and get Uni, so... go on and find something and... we've... never seen childcare workers as educators, like we're trying to do now, we've seen them as minders, as babysitters, or creche workers... like, that's the tradition, or... the history of childcare, in Australia anyway...*

There is a sense of disbelief, as well as some disgust, that those outside the childcare field, such as Centrelink[21] workers, should have such a poor sense of what it involves. What

comes through most is the sense of disappointment at those who fail to match up to the mark that committed workers set for themselves.

Dianne gets closest out of any of the participants at identifying the 'different way of thinking' of this group of workers;

> *...they're not necessarily things you can actually... learn out of a book.... Not everybody gets it, they just kind-of look at a, a child who's having a tantrum, and just see a child who's having a tantrum, whereas a childcare worker will look at a child having a tantrum and try to work out why they're having it, and how they can help the child get through the tantrum, so... it's just about a different way of thinking, when they're little kids...* (Dianne, 40s)

In talking at length about the subcultural resources of 'the committed worker', I want to show how pervasive this notion is for workers, even if there has been no name for what they value, or any explicit articulation of this. Nonetheless I maintain that it functions as a form of capital within the childcare field, valued and appreciated by some workers and supervisors, who recognise how valuable such commitment is. However its value is muted because of the dominance of other notions of who workers should be, as we shall see in the next section on professionalisation.

Childcare and professionalisation

I have demonstrated the importance of the practices of the committed worker, which I argue constitute a form of subcultural capital within the childcare field. This form of capital is a valued resource for those workers who invest in it, an accumulation of practical wisdom that draws on their personal backgrounds, as well as the historical wisdom of generations of workers in childcare. Yet its value as a resource can be hard to recognise when only certain sorts of educational and social capital are privileged within the field. These arise from the push for professionalisation that has come to dominate the Australian childcare field in recent decades (Elliott, 2006; Faragher & MacNaughton, 1990; Fenech, et al., 2010; King & Meagher, 2009; Lyons, 2012; Sebastian-Nickell & Milne, 1992; Stonehouse, 1992; Whitington, et al., 2009). This echoes similar projects in early childhood fields in other wealthy countries (Adams, 2010; Brock, 2013; Dalli & Urban, 2010; Dayan, 2010; Douglass & Gittell, 2012; Musgrave, 2010; Oberhuemer, et al., 2010; Osgood, 2012; Timmerman & Schreuder, 2008). This push for professionalism has legitimated a particular form of capital within childcare, represented by valued educational capital (tertiary education) and particular forms of social capital (professional networking).

Given the intensity of debates around professionalism (e.g., Sachs, 2001; Wilkinson, 2005) it remains a highly-contested term. One issue that arises among childcare workers is that an everyday meaning of 'professional' is 'a person competent or skilled in a particular activity' (OED Online, 2013). At one point Mia observes;

> *I think also if you're professional, because I've had incidents, been in situations where I think, 'I can't deal with this' but I know when I get to that point, and I can turn around to my co-worker and say, 'You need to take over, because I just can't do it.'* (Mia, 40s)

Mia uses the word here to describe a form of emotional responsibility, which is not an idea usually associated with professionalism. When participants use the term, it can be hard to tell if they are using it as a way of describing competence generally, or as a validation of the push for professionalism within the field.

Many occupations, particularly since the middle of last century, have engaged in projects of professionalisation, in order to raise the status of their work (Drudy, 2008; Furlong, et al., 2000; Galman & Mallozzi, 2012; Healy, 2009; Sayer, 2011a). The evidence of the success of these projects has been mixed, delivering uneven economic gains to the occupations involved, particularly those fields related to care work (England, et al., 2002; England & Folbre, 1999; Folbre, 1995; Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Any economic gains have been most noticeable for those fields that have been able to align themselves with more powerful discourses, such as that of science (England, 2005; Healy, 2009).

Those within the broader early childhood field have tried to improve the status of the work through professionalisation, and well as similar appeals to scientific credibility through the power of developmental psychology (Burman, 1994). The assumption is that early childhood work should be able to follow a similar trajectory to the professionalisation that has occurred in fields like nursing. Yet there are different schemes of value shaping particular sorts of work. Nurses, for example, have been able to show how their work demonstrates similar skills to other medical staff. Childcare work, on the other hand, is most often done unpaid, in the private sphere, and almost exclusively by women (Duffy, 2007; Macdonald, 1998; T. Warren, 2011). Arguments for early childhood professionalism seem to ignore the existing low status of not just these occupations, but the activities and skills that they involve, and the difficulties of changing these perceptions of value (Lister, 2007).

Brock (2013) exemplifies research around professionalism in early childhood. She suggests;

> *The rewards of being a professional include* **social status, power, salary***, sense of vocation and enjoyment of work. Educators of young children often have huge job satisfaction and value in their work, which contributes to both their personal and professional lives.* (Brock, 2013, p. 41; emphasis added)

Brock accurately identifies the 'satisfaction' – a use-value - that many childcare workers feel in regard to their job. This was certainly true among the workers interviewed in this research, although the satisfaction is always complicated by the lack of material and cultural recognition (Colley, 2006; Simms, 2006; Waerness, 1984). However the absence for workers of the first three rewards of professionalism that she lists – namely social status, power, and salary (exchange-values) – are then glossed-over in her analysis. Much research around professionalism in childcare seems to do this, ignoring the lack of exchange-value that

childcare work accrues even after it has been 're-badged' as professional. This apparent blindspot around material recognition perhaps reflects the particular locations in social space of those conducting the research, and the taken-for-grantedness for them of access to economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990b).

The struggles of the social field around the value of childcare tend to reflect, I suggest, the (classed) locations in social space of those concerned. Top-down professionalism models are often associated with an audit culture, as Drudy (2008) notes, reflecting a concern for value-for-money amongst employers rather than the well-being of those on low wages. Indeed the push for professionalism in early childhood has been accompanied in the last twenty years by a significant expansion in audit processes (Brennan, 2007; Bretherton, 2010; Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Elliott, 2006; Ishimine, 2011; Osgood, 2012; Sumsion, 2006). These audit cultures constitute attempts by governments to control particular fields, and have resulted in heightened surveillance of childcare work, and greatly increased expectations (Dahlberg, et al., 2007). In the section below, I show how workers have attempted to engage in the struggles over the meaning of their work, and the control that comes along with professionalisation.

Taking up professionalism as symbolic capital in childcare

There are advantages to being aligned with legitimated forms of capital, and this could be seen among some respondents in this research. Julie is upbeat about the recognition that staff are starting to get for their work;

> *...education doesn't just start when you hit kinder, or it doesn't just start when you hit prep, they're being educated right from when they enter our care, in early childhood settings, and I think that's... that's really positive, that... it's, it's slowly becoming the trend that...* ***everyone in society sees us as educators as well****, and that... the children don't just learn when they hit school, and don't just learn when they hit kinder, but they're learning right from day one, even before they're born, they're learning and I think... generally everyone's starting to pick up on that, which is positive* (Julie, 30s, emphasis added)

Although Julie suggests that everyone sees us as educators, it is clear that even for her this is a hard belief to maintain. She, like most of those interviewed, acknowledges earlier in the interview that, 'I think in the wider community, we're still just babysitters'. Julie is struggling to reconcile her own sense of being devalued with the rhetoric of professionalism that is promoted within the field.

Lisa is clear about why she believes we should be seen as professional, drawing attention to the ever-increasing requirements of the work;

> *...people go into childcare because it's an easy profession... but it's not... And especially now, if they saw how much work we have to do... the early years, and all these outcomes, and learning stories, and portfolios... the planning and... If they say how much we have to do, then they would realise that we're not far off being... primary teachers, type of thing...* (Lisa, 40s)

Lisa's observations about the intensification of the work requirements are echoed by other participants, and other researchers (Bretherton, 2010; Osgood, 2012; Pocock, et al., 2008). I want to argue, however, that to work as hard, or be as qualified as other professionals is still not the same as being valued as a professional. This example may be one of those moments where the 'folk' definition of professional as 'skilled' becomes confused with dominant-class notions of professional work.

Others are cautiously optimistic about the improvements in the field that have come through the focus on professionalism and accreditation (the audit process), but seem to be more aware of the mismatch between the effort put into these 'improvements', and any improvement in the status of childcare work;

> *like, now we have the* [Early Years Learning; National Quality] *Frameworks and everything, but, um.... It will, it'll be a slow process... and hopefully that will really improve things, but... it's still going to a lot of the same people, and the same centres... doing those things, in their own way, that isn't necessarily good.* (Ondine, 30s)

> *I know we're going through a phase now, and whatever, where we're getting away from that, and starting to call ourselves educators and... you know we are being better trained, and better educated, and we've got qualifications but.... the perception's still is... you know, most of these girls who go out and say, you know, 'I've um... I'm a childcare worker', anyone who doesn't know about the industry will just say, 'Well, you just play with kids all day. We babysit or whatever...* (Dianne, 40s)

For both Ondine and Dianne there seems to be acknowledgement that to work at a higher level (or to be expected by others to work at a higher level) is not the same as actually being viewed or valued any differently. They can see a gap between the value attributed to existing professions and the public beliefs that still shape the childcare field, which do not legitimate the capital they mobilise as committed workers.

Childcare 'professionalism' and the field of power

Most definitions of professionalism suggest that professions usually exercise control over the conditions of their work, such as who is allowed to do the work and how much the work is worth (Drudy, 2008; Furlong, et al., 2000; Sachs, 2001; Wilkinson, 2005). Someone in a profession should be able to exercise authority in their area of expertise. The views of interviewees indicates an understanding of this definition of professionalism while pointing to quite a different experience of it in their own work. Samantha was one of the few to talk about the issue of occupational closure, as someone who has a degree, and has worked within the school system;

> *the assistant almost wants a shared teaching role... and you're kind-of like, 'No! Like, I've been to Uni, I've done that... you know, you haven't done that. This is my job, and I want that responsibility. I want to be in charge'. And sort-of then having to share my job, just to keep my assistant happy, and yeah, like it just ge... it sometimes, it feels a bit, um... you know, it just feels a bit... ridiculous.* (Samantha, 30s)

Samantha correctly identifies one of the dilemmas of professionalising childcare work. There is always a large amount of work to do in childcare settings, and so a need for everyone to work together diligently to complete the minimal requirements of the day. There is a long-standing tradition of 'role-sharing' in childcare, that is quite different from the experience in stand-alone kinder settings (Bretherton, 2010). In the UK, Osgood observes that, '[t]he collegial and collaborative ethos promoted and valued in nurseries was cultivated and maintained by flattened hierarchies' (2012, p. 144), and Australian childcare follows a similar pattern. Osgood (2012) suggests that this makes it necessary for staff to play down the fact of their own qualifications. So although Samantha is (degree-)qualified as a teacher and her colleague has a Certificate III (see glossary), they are both considered 'early childhood educators' and treated the same by parents. It may be this egalitarian tradition in childcare that leads to workers being judged on experience and hardwork (i.e., as committed workers) rather than by professionalised categories. Samantha understands this egalitarian ideal, when she qualifies her statement above, saying 'That makes me sound like a real bitch.' For Samantha, her (professional) cultural capital is delivering little advantage in this situation.

One of the assumptions about professionalism is that workers will be able to wield authority in the relationships they have with others. So Brittany assumes an uncomplicated relationship with parents in this example, where the worker is presumed to have power through her knowledge;

> *we just look up 'biting' research, and give it to them, and just, um... let the parents know what we do, with the children, so that they can go home and do the same thing, so it's a steady process* (Brittany, 20s)

While some parents may be willing to follow the lead of childcare workers, such relationships are rarely as straightforward as Brittany implies. More usually, as Dianne observes, parents will listen to the opinions of the workers, and then do what they were already doing anyway;

> *When you try to translate that to parents, they kind-of don't get that, and they just see the behaviour and try to deal with the consequences, of the behaviour, and just sort-of react to it, so they'll have... even though we'll... you know, explain what we do to deal with it here, they don't necessarily follow-through at home, so then it causes a problem when there's not consistency.* (Dianne, 40s)

It seems that assumptions about professional influence may sometimes blind interviewees to the actual relationships of power that they experience in their work, and the lack of authority that is ceded to them within the field. Langford thoughtfully questions whether and how early childhood staff can wield authority, given that 'increasing numbers of teachers face social inequities based on gender, ethnicity and race' (2010, p. 122). This is an important point, reinforcing evidence from this study about the gap between interviewees' assumptions about their authority, and the lack of authority they actually have in their daily work. The low value of childcare work in the field of power prevents legitimation of the capital workers are accumulating within the field (McNay, 1999).

A more accurate reflection of workers' authority occurs in those times when parents insist on a particular routine for their child, or ask a staff member to implement particular disciplinary strategies. One of the most common instances of this is around sleep routines, as Mirjeta relates;

> *a lot of times it's been over sleep... getting children to sleep. They don't want them to have their afternoon sleep, because they're not going to bed until twelve o'clock at night.* [skeptical] *Okaaaay! I don't believe in letting a child go to sleep for twenty minutes... and waking them up. Because they haven't even... got into the sleep. I'd rather they didn't have a sleep at all, but the child needs sleep* (Mirjeta, 60s)

In theory, if Mirjeta is a professional - with more than forty years of experience - she can expect to be listened to respectfully and have her advice taken seriously. Instead she is forced into the absurd position of trying to follow the parent's wishes about preventing the child sleeping. Yet she knows, through her practical wisdom as well as her specific understanding of this child, how much that child needs to sleep.

I would suggest that this and similar experiences are not indicative of professional power or symbolic capital, but of powerlessness and low valued work.

Reifying professionalism

To take up the language of professionalism as a researcher, even if the professional image you are constructing is different, may strengthen a discourse you wish to question. So those who seek to create alternative forms of professionalism, whether this be 'democratic' professionalism (Sachs, 2001), 'activist' professionalism (Fenech, et al., 2010), or 'uncertain' professionalism (Stronach, et al., 2002), all leave intact the idea that professionalism is worthwhile. This is particularly an issue for childcare researchers who want to question the inequalities of the field. Osgood, for example, as part of her extensive research with childcare workers, develops an interesting argument about 'the complexities of doing professionalism/being professional in a highly gendered and devalued employment sector' (2012, p. 119). I share her perception of the complex situation in which workers find themselves, in regard to the dominance of this type of language within the sector. In such a situation, it seems important to look for language to talk about the experience of childcare work that may be able to carry different associations than the often classed and gendered language of professionalism.

Workers have the same dilemma when they use the language of professionalism to frame what they do;

> *We've got the new framework's here, I think which will help with our professionalism, um... but the way we, we... speak in relations to ourselves and what we do, and put it out to families, I think will educate... parents into what the children are actually learning, and what they're,,, actually gaining from being in a groupcare setting. Which is more than groupcare. Which is the point of the education* (Lisa, 40s)

Although positioning herself as professional offers one route to feeling valued, this will only be effective if others will take this status seriously. Within the field, identifying with professionalism will offer Lisa some symbolic capital, but beyond childcare circles, in fields with very different perceptions of the value of childcare, it may not have any value at all.

Some workers are aware of this particular dilemma. They remain skeptical about the audit culture that has accompanied the attempts at professionalisation, and the lack of external goods that have been realised through it. Amber expresses the mixed feelings of these workers;

> *I just wish it was a, a little bit more respected. You know, by the government agencies that are putting us through all this... you know, training, and they expect us to... follow all these standards, that I suppose primary teachers are following too... They're not giving us the respect, parents aren't giving us the respect... Sometimes I think, you know, teachers themselves... aren't giving themselves the respect. And... they're reluctant to speak up for themselves and say, 'You know, I do my job, I do it well... I have to put in training, and... time, and effort...' And a lot of the time, our own money and resources...* [wearied laugh] *um... to educate these children. I'm not... caring... you know my job is not just to care for these children, I'm not a babysitter, I'm a teacher... and I will, you know, gladly say that to anyone who asks me what my job is, is 'I'm an early childhood educator'.* (Amber, 20s)

Amber insightfully captures the mixed emotions of many workers about professionalisation. On one level, she recognises that these are about being respected better, hence her understanding that to call herself 'an early childhood educator', can be a way of reframing others ideas of who she is and what she is capable of (Bourdieu, 1989). On the other hand, it is clear that her daily experience is of domination and exploitation, though she does not describe it in those terms. Her co-workers are too demoralised to respect each other, and her workplace is so under-funded that low-waged workers are contributing their own time and money to keep the place afloat.

This is the heart of the struggles of the social field. The notion of professional work, and the capital that can be accumulated through doing it, is a powerful one. Professionalism represented legitimated capital across a number of fields, but the question is whether anyone takes seriously the idea of a *childcare* professional. The lack of symbolic power wielded by childcare workers, even if they were to mobilise collectively, may not be sufficient to change the perceptions (and thus rewards) of this sort of work across the entire field of power.

Resistance in an exploitative system

The committed worker within childcare has a distinct dilemma. While their investment in this subcultural capital allows them to feel a sense of worth and value at a personal level, and sometimes within their workplace, it has little impact within the field of power. Childcare remains a job characterised by lack – of power, or decent wages, of respect, and of decent working conditions. As Bretherton (2010) acknowledges, it is this group of workers who basically hold the system together, making it far more functional than anyone is paying for.

This exploitation, which cannot really be acknowledged - because of the de-motivation that would result - means that committed workers have a complicated relationship with resistance.

Lawler (2000), in her work on motherhood, has written about the difficulties of 'resisting' when what is being resisted is seen as valuable. As she observes;

> *The image of the social actor as revolutionary resister in her everyday life is a romanticized picture which has little to do with most of what goes in in the social world: it is also an image which relies on a view of power-as-domination. As such it cannot deal with the complexities of power – the ways, for example, power induces and creates pleasure and meaning; the ways in which it appeals to a normality or a fulfilment; the ways in which it can be hard to disentangle what is power and what is resistance*. (Lawler, 2000, p. 169)

As do the mothers in Lawler's study, many childcare workers find themselves in an impossible position, where they find their work fulfilling and yet in doing it they must contend with their diminishment in other's eyes, which has very real and material effects. As Sayer (2011b) argues, jobs that are seen as lacking in dignity are done predominantly by those disadvantaged by class, race or gender. This structural and economic inequality then creates inequalities of recognition, because such work 'tends to be taken as confirming the status of those who do it' (Sayer, 2011b, p. 212), which feeds back into the low economic value of this work. Walkerdine makes a similar point about the difficulty of resisting when the price of being valued as a teacher, and as a woman, is to be 'totally responsible' (1986, p. 63), suggesting that the committed worker's embrace of responsibility may come at a cost.

Resisting exploitation, respecting the work

The last chapter described those workers who seem to embrace *recalcitrance*, an unwillingness to do any more than the bare minimum, as their only response to the unfairness of their working lives. For those who invest in the work – committed workers – the story is necessarily more complex. I suggest that two sorts of resistance are evident within the data; the first is a sort of *dis-ease*, where workers question the values of the childcare field, but struggle to know how to challenge the system, and the second is *subversion*, an oblique challenge to the prevailing power relations within the field.

Dis-ease

This first form of resistance seems to happen internally, at the level of values. As Sayer has noted, in his discussion of the moral and ethical dimension of class practices;

> *...individuals' ethical dispositions need not be entirely consistent with the particular nexus of relations in which they are situated or with wider discursive norms.... Such differences can generate anomalous behaviour and resistance, whether deliberate or inadvertent* (2005, p. 44)

The committed worker is in a difficult situation in childcare. They believe in the work, but their practical wisdom is frequently at odds with bureaucratic expectations. At a personal level

they choose to hold values about their work that are at odds with the normative assumptions espoused by those promoting professionalism, the self-segregation that Kenway and McLeod (2004) described. It is a dis-ease, a discomfort with the guiding logic of professionalism (things like 'emotional control'; Illouz, 1997, pp. 38-39), given their own personal understandings of what childcare should look like.

Perhaps the classic example of this, and one brought up by a majority of the participants in the research, was their frustration with the heightened safety regimes of modern childcare, as Dianne observes;

> *...the fact that we've got this generation of children that we've wrapped up in cotton wool... We've got a fantastic peppercorn tree that we're not allowed to climb, and I think, 'What a shame!' You know, when I was a kid, we got dirty, and we climbed, and we hurt ourselves, and all the rest, and we're bringing up a generation of children who don't, who can't take calculated risks...* (Dianne, 40s)

While discourses of child safety are too intense for anyone to ignore, there is a distinct difference between the practical wisdom of the committed worker, and the more abstract bureaucratic/managerial response, derived from the differing logics of their location in social space. While the latter sees only the injuries and associated threat of litigation or departmental censure, childcare workers are concerned as much with children's lives as with their bodies, a broader understanding of well-being. As committed workers, they understand that too much safety means too little exploration, and even less learning. As Amber argues;

> *You know, these rules of... 'You can't have that climbing equipment there, because it's too close to dirt, and not on the soft-fall. But they* [the children] *want it there because they're building a cubby house there. I feel like we give them too much limitation and not enough... freedom.... And you know what? There doesn't have to be climbing equipment there, for them to fall over. I've seen kids fall over their own feet* [laughs]*.... And you just really think that there's too much limitation, too much bureaucratic tape, um... too much focus on paperwork, and not enough focus on... teaching being with the kids, teaching the kids...* (Amber, 20s)

Yet even Amber, with her obvious frustrations around this issue, does not feel able to challenge the inflexible bureaucratic line on child safety. Although she believes that management are wrong to get her to tell the children they cannot build their cubby where they want to, she has not found a way to challenge the 'wisdom' of those safety regimes, except to sound off to the researcher, as an outsider. The discomfort remains, but so do the existing practices. This is a good example of the constraints imposed by fields. Workers' subcultural capital is unable to generate much symbolic power on this issue, because child safety is an issue that impacts on fields far beyond childcare.

Subversion

Though much resistance remains at the level of personal values, invisible and rarely spoken about, some workers find ways to resist more actively. Fenech and her colleagues (2010) describe an 'ethics of resistance' that is suggestive of this phenomenon, though I do not see

it as integral to professionalism in the way they do. This resistance seems more about opposition to 'professionalism' as currently defined, rather than an expression of it. As noted by O'Connell (2011), professionalism often seems to workers like an imposition, rather than something to aspire to. It resonates much more with Osgood's observation of 'small acts of subversion' (2012, p. 133) in the lives of the nursery workers in her study.

For Anne, working in a highly corporatised childcare setting, with very rigid guidelines about every aspect of daily life, such resistance took the form of a humorous re-interpretation of the rules, as she describes;

> *I was really annoyed. My... the... one other thing that I did that was... silly... but it amused me at the time... we had to wear hats, sun hats, in the middle of winter and I just thought, 'That is the most idiotic rule in the world.' ...they had one of their little... they'd have a little cohort... come down, and they'd say,* [stridently] *'You aren't wearing a hat' so, fine, I went and made myself, out of a newspaper, a big newspaper pirate hat, and out I went to play... one of the other staff said to me afterwards, 'You're so naughty! You did exactly what they said. You wore a hat outside, and you stuck up for your...' and I thought, 'Was that really what I did?' And it probably was, but... I'm not always like that. It's only when I get provoked that I become like that... and so I'm thinking, 'Oh, okaaaayyy, this shows that I'm a little bit stressed... and I'm irritated.* (Anne, 50s)

From the reaction of her colleague, this sort of defiance is a risky action for Anne, which could have resulted in serious consequences (see Pocock, et al., 2008, p. 479). Such acts of subversion may be specific to each workplace and time, in terms of the variety of petty rules that will seem injurious in different contexts. Although most childcare workplaces share this experience of over-regulation, the opportunities for subversion will depend on the management and history of each service.

Sometimes the pressure comes from the parent-users of a service, as Ruby's experience shows;

> *we... were having... discussions, because... the, the parent wanted us to force... her child to go... to the toilet, and had... very different views about the toilet training.... she had her views on how it should be done, and we had... our knowledge, combined with... our limits, of what we could do, in childcare.... 'If she doesn't want to go, she doesn't want to go, you know, we can't force her, we can't pull her, we can't drag her, we can't intimidate her into doing it, we can't bribe her, that's, it's not okay, and, um... so... it was trying to... get to a level where... we could help her satisfy her needs.... but then also keep our own values.... as childcare workers, because... we don't wanna have.... you know,* [amused tone of voice] *emotionally scarring a child... on our repertoire of... things we did this year, so...* [laughs] (Ruby, 20s)

In this case, Ruby was able to draw on ideas about children's rights to defend her and her colleagues' resistance to the mother's demands. It is a reminder, though, of the differing power relations that exist between the government-funded school sector and the childcare field, given the greater say that parents have in a childcare system funded predominantly by parent fees.

The last example of resistance, is of resistance to those wider governmental and bureaucratic pressures that have intensified with the introduction of a National Quality Framework (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011). Marie, who as a pedagogical leader within her service seems more willing to challenge what is taken-for-granted about the work, recounts;

> *Am I writing two individual learning stories per month for most of my children? A big fat 'no'! I seem to be doing everything else right, so I'm... and I've been encouraging others... to also write that 'no'. Don't lie! Say 'no', because maybe... this is our way of changing that expectation...* (Marie, 40s)

This constitutes a more direct challenge to the systems that control childcare. As Marie seems to understand, these only have power for as long as workers continue to comply unthinkingly with bureaucratic demands, however unreasonable these might be, or however unresponsive to the existing demands on their time.

Marie returned to this theme in the focus group discussion, and feels that her subversion has begun to change some of those expectations;

> *Marie: I think when we had our conversation I had just been... filling in some really pointless pieces of documentation to... it was about a check and balance and... and there was a question... you know, the expectation of how many learning stories for each child, and, and 'am I meeting this expectation', and I bravely wrote, 'No'...*
>
> *Yarrow: It's your words that made me ask this question* [N.B. within the focus group].
>
> *Marie: ...on every single one, and... they've come around again and I just... well, I wrote 'no' on every one of those, and I've just had my... um... we have a period professional review, which is quite an in-depth process, and discussion, and... you know, I came out of that just feeling great about myself, and about my work, and I'm still writing 'no' and I've still been appointed the educational leader, and I'm still the person who unofficially supports all the other educational leaders in the organisation, and... so, I've said I'm going to keep writing 'no, I'm not meeting this expectation', so that I can change the expectation.*

In this way, Marie seems to be articulating the values of the committed worker, and using this capital not just to be a better worker, but to impact on her workplace, which is one of a network of private centres. Although committed workers are usually valued for the contribution they make to their services, not all will have the experience Marie does, because she also has relatively high cultural capital compared to others at her service. Challenging the power relations of the childcare field is risky, and it is often easier for those with less symbolic capital to stick with what is expected of them.

Resistance and constraint

Marie's subversion, which having an impact, is still at an individual level. It is difficult to find more collective notions of classed resistance, such as the strike action by Scottish childcare workers mentioned in the previous chapter. Lauren's experience is interesting, having previously worked in the US childcare system, and so having experienced alternative

practices and standards. Recalling a conversation she had in her mothers' group, where she felt compelled to defend childcare in a more public way, she says;

> *she thought that you just... watched the kids play, and I said, 'A lot more goes into it, that apparently you don't even realise'.*
> *There's a lot... the push right now from the Union is to get pay for professionals, and there's a lot of that talk going on, in the industry, I guess, but I have a hard time... talking to other people in the centre sometimes because they don't see themselves as educators either. And I'll say, 'You're coming to school, and you're coming to... I'm a teacher' and they're like, 'No, you're not, you're not at school, you're at childcare!'* (Lauren, 30s)

Again in this we see the value of childcare work not being recognised, and this stings Lauren into a defence of her work. Yet when Lauren tries to raise awareness about the value of the work with her colleagues, she runs up against their apathy about any possibility of change in the field (see also glossary entry on Unionisation).

In looking at the issue of how childcare is shaped deeply by classed practices and power relations, it is this sense of constraint that come through most strongly (Sayer, 2007). Workers are constrained by many factors: an inability to imagine that change is possible, as Lauren notes here; how over-stretched they are, in their professional and personal lives; the lack of strong Unions to advocate on their behalf – though this may be starting to change (Australian Services Union, 2009; Cortis & Meagher, 2012; LHMU - Childcare division, 2011; United Voice, 2011); and the dilemma of how their own financial gains will impact on families.

Conclusions – the struggles of the childcare field

This chapter explored the struggles within the childcare field over the meanings and value of this work. The workers in this study reject assumptions about the low value of childcare work, and invest heavily in their own skills and knowledge, a form of subcultural capital that I have called 'the committed worker'. The committed worker reflects a shared vision of the value of childcare work, fuelled by a desire for respect and respectability, and the dignity that can be earned through being a responsible caregiver. By investing in this subcultural capital, they accumulate value within the childcare field, in the eyes of their co-workers and perhaps also their supervisors.

This is contrasted with the dominant capital-accumulation strategy within the field, promoted by academics, bureaucrats and governments, that draws on dominant-class understandings of value. To be a professional, in this view, is to invest in legitimated educational capital, thus demanding the respect of others as a skilled and credentialled member of the workforce. Kinos (2010) astutely observes that there is an ongoing classification struggle going on within childcare settings. Drawing on Bourdieusian understandings, he suggests;

> *The struggle aims to make the field function according to the personal interest of the actors. Therefore the struggle of the field is primarily a classification struggle: what is labeled good and what bad. The essential thing is that the struggle is rarely overt –*

> *people are either not aware of their profit-seeking or do not admit it* (Kinos, 2010, p. 101)

Workers know what they believe to be good practice, but their location in social space often prevents them recognising this as valuable capital, and so they do not try and challenge the existing logic of the field. For those who do control the field, reclassifying childcare as professional seems an obvious route to a more-valued field, and this has been promoted through research and policy arenas. However it appears to ignore the underlying reality of the childcare field. First, there is the nature of the existing workforce – who have frequently entered childcare through *lack* of educational capital (Colley, 2006; Colley, et al., 2003) and who may not feel able or willing to remake themselves as tertiary-educated professionals. Second are the existing perceptions of the worth of childcare work. These may be even harder to shift than the workforce themselves. When childcare work seems like something anyone can do, convincing anyone that it is a highly-valued professional career will be difficult. To do so while childcare wages remain stubbornly low seems to be an exercise in futility.

Interestingly, Steedman (1985) drew a similar conclusion thirty years ago about the discordant classed discourses experienced by some women entering primary school. As she observed;

> *It is possible that working class recruits brought with them attitudes towards children and ideas about child-rearing that provided them with strong resistance to the official ideology.... The place where this ideology meets other, half-articulated, 'common-sense' theories about childhood, is a shadowy one*. (Steedman, 1985, p. 158)

These commonsense theories can be seen emerging for committed workers, such as their understanding that sometimes they need to be tough, whether dealing with children or with adults. This toughness constitutes part of the practical wisdom gained from a life hedged by many constraints, and with little distance from necessity (Lawler, 2000). Their practical wisdom often sets in motion some resistance, even if this does not manifest as traditional forms of workplace resistance, such as strike action. Their discontent is most often reflected in questioning the values of the field, although some do find ways to subvert the existing power-relations of the field.

I argue that promoting professionalism implies a level of respect and reward that is absent for workers in childcare, and that this absence is often ignored by those in a position to influence the debates. These competing schemes of value, the committed worker or the early childhood professional, represent aspirations engendered by different locations in social space. I suggest that the long-standing efforts to promote professionalisation, through misunderstanding the conditions and lack of value of childcare work, have ended up as an effective way to govern exploited workers, rather than achieving the goal of a more valued workforce.

These struggles over what childcare work should be, and how it should be done, matter deeply for the childcare field. They reflect a classed struggle about the lived practices of childcare work, reflecting differing expectations about such issues as teamwork, the value of practical wisdom, and the importance of robust emotional engagement. In the next chapter I will show how this classed struggle is shaped by the gendering both of the workforce and the mothers who have their own responsibilities for children. Examining workers' responsibilities as women reveals that the struggles over the right to define childcare work seen in this chapter have parallels in the differing types of logic underpinning child-rearing practices, in both homes and at childcare.

Chapter 7: Maternal work

Introduction

In the preceding chapters we saw how childcare work is formed and informed by economic relationships, and how in choosing this job, workers become associated with a particular disadvantaged location in social space. Childcare work lacks value within the field of power, and this is reflected in the lack of respect and minimal economic rewards that workers experience. I argue that the complexity and responsibility of this work along with the lack of adequate compensation constitutes exploitation. Some workers do not accept this exploited status, and contest their lack of value by investing in a form of subcultural capital, that I have called 'the committed worker'. This subcultural capital is the result of their commitment to a sense of respectability and responsibility, and involves investing in the use-value of the work. The lack of legitimation across the entire childcare field for this subcultural capital means that it provides mostly internal goods, rather than external rewards.

In talking about the economic relations of childcare work, as well as its worth to those who do it, I have suggested that many of the classed inequalities associated with the job are compounded by gendered inequalities. This is the result of childcare being constructed discursively as 'women's work' more often than as menial work. The highly 'female-concentrated' (Lupton, 2006) nature of the work exacerbates workers' struggles for recognition and redistribution. This is obvious to many who work in the field;

> *It's definitely childcare workers... the perception here is... that it's... like a domesticated job, you know, that it's an extension of a housewife, you know, child-minding... I think that's still a perception by... men generally, in this country, I would say, that that's how they'd see you... as the... as you say 'women's work', it's domestic, and that's why it's... probably another reason why it's not well-paid, and not highly valued.* (Dianne, 40s)

In this chapter I keep the focus on gendered inequality, showing that for childcare work in particular, the lack of value results from the field's close association with mothering.

Feminist scholars, drawing on the work of Hays (1996), have shown how motherhood has been fiercely contested in recent decades, as a result of feminist-propelled societal changes, such as women's increased participation in the workforce (Ailwood, 2008; Grace, 2001; Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Lawler, 2000; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Yeo, 2005). Women's greater workforce participation since the 1970s has created a greater need for childcare, and so childcare services have expanded greatly during this same period (Brennan, et al., 2009; Brennan & O'Donnell, 1986; Hage, 2000; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2012). I begin the chapter by showing how the idea of intensive mothering expectations (Hays, 1996) is paralleled within the childcare field by the phenomenon of 'intensive caregiving expectations'. Drawing on the concept of shadow work (Macdonald, 1998), I show how intensive caregiving incorporates classed as well as gendered expectations, and what this means for women at

this particular intersection of class and gender (Hancock, 2007). In examining intensive caregiving expectations, I draw on my data to see how, as Reay suggests 'structural effects [may be] visible within small scale interactions' (2004b, p. 437) and how these may reveal the associations of gender with classed relations of inequality. For example, I draw attention to the way that mothering is seen as an important qualification for childcare work and how this obscures the skills of the committed worker. Intensive caregiving expectations pressure workers to be 'the perfect caregiver', echoing the pressures on women as mothers.

Expectations of mothering

I noted in Chapter 5 how gendered inequalities arise through the taking-up of caring roles by women, a 'choice' that results from cultural assumptions about who women should be in relation to others. These assumptions seem to be shifting and intensifying in recent times in apparent response to the gains made by women as a result of the feminist movement (O'Brien Hallstein, 2008; Reskin, 1988; van Egmond, et al., 2010). Hays' (1996) exploration of mothering, and her claim that expectations of this have become more intensive in recent years, has lead to a variety of work exploring this phenomenon (O'Brien, 2008; T. Taylor, 2011; Vincent, 2010; Vincent, et al., 2004).

I want to explore these maternalist ideologies and the ways they impact upon the field of childcare. Feminists have long challenged the myth of the perfect mother, and its classed elements (Glenn, 2010; Grace, 1998; Hays, 1996). Walkerdine and Lucy, addressing this myth, argue;

> *'not only that women's labour of natural love is profoundly oppressive but also that natural mothering is a historically constructed phenomenon.... this has meant the different regulation of proletarian and bourgeois women, often pitting one against the other'* (1989, p. 15).

In this chapter I demonstrate that childcare work is a key site for this regulation of women, where classed and gendered forms of oppression combine to control and constrain women's options. As Walkerdine and Lucey also observe, mothering has become 'central to the way our modern state educational and social welfare practices operate' (1989, p. 20). In the rest of the chapter I look at how myths of mothering informs the myth of the perfect caregiver, and the consequences this has for the lives of childcare workers.

Intensive caregiving expectations

Hays argues that there are three important elements of intensive mothering expectations; that women are primarily responsible, that mothering requires intensive effort, and that the work must be unselfish, uncorrupted by monetary considerations (1996, p. 76). These same elements are at work in the childcare field, producing intensive caregiving expectations. The previous two chapters showed the hard work (and exploitation) of workers, and the high level of responsibility many of them show towards their work. Hays' (1996) point about the

unselfishness that is expected of mothers is reflected in the altruistic assumptions made by others about childcare work, and by many workers themselves. As one observed;

> *it's a very meaningful job, and.... because I have, um, because I have passion, this work, um... keeps me in this job, and I love...* [unclear] *the kids...* [Soek-Teng, 30s]

This investment in altruism could be seen throughout the narratives of interviewees, in a variety of ways, whether caring for children, parents, or each other. Intensive caregiving expectations are the mechanism that enforces the combination of gendered and classed exploitation that childcare workers experience. Feeling little choice but to be responsible, and knowing how intensive the work is, the altruism they feel makes them reluctant to demand better pay and conditions, and so exploitation results.

In her study of childcare in the UK, Osgood (2012) makes a similar point about the combination of gendered and classed experiences of workers. She sees a clear link between their familial experiences and their current working lives. As she suggests, 'the women in this study are understood to have been channelled into caring professions through their childhood socialisation and through societal expectations of what is expected of (working-class) women' (Osgood, 2012, p. 137). It is the combination of those classed experiences and the expectations put on them as women that makes childcare work seem the ideal vehicle for gaining a sense of value (Colley, 2006).

This chapter is structured around the three elements of intensive caregiving expectations that parallel Hays' (1996) analysis of intensive mothering; women's responsibility, the intensity that it demands, and the selflessness that is assumed to govern it. I begin, however, by highlighting the close connections between mothering and childcare work, showing how mothering has become seen as the *sine qua non* of qualifications for childcare work. Finally I look at how the intensity of this process for both mothers and caregivers plays out emotionally, generating strong feelings that impact significantly on the lives of workers.

Mothering as a key qualification

In Chapter 5 I showed that the exploitation of workers is partly a gendered exploitation, which draws on their willingness to take up caring work, as was true for Anne, who came into childcare initially through her care for a disabled daughter. In this section I want to build on this idea, showing how the experience of mothering, or the gendered embodiment necessary to be one, has traditionally been viewed as the main qualification necessary for work in this field (Cameron, 2006; Sargent, 2005; Vincent & Braun, 2012). Dianne's view, quoted earlier, showed how some workers make the connection between childcare's association with unpaid domestic labour and the consequences this has in terms of their exploitation. Although I am focused on the mothering role in this section, it is worth remembering that both mothering and childcare work do not just involve the (relatively) higher status work of looking

after children, but also the routine drudgery of domestic labour, such as cleaning toilets, tidying up, or serving food (Skeggs, 1997).

Given the youth of the childcare workforce[22], as reflected in this group of research participants, many of them are not mothers themselves. For those who are, they see this as an important part of their skills. This was an issue that become obvious from among the pilot group of interviews, and so became one of the questions that were the focus of the shorter interviews. Dianne, once again, has strong views on this;

> *...to be honest, I... I still think that, um, a childcare worker who is also a parent, is just a little bit better than every other, than a childcare worker who hasn't been a parent, because they empathise with... the parent, and I see that, um... staff here who don't have children are fantastic, um... but their focus is the child, and often they forget about the parent, they're fantastic with the child. When the parent comes in with a concern, or um... question, or a request, sometimes they'll go, 'Ooh, you know, what's all that crap about?* (Dianne, 40s)

Dianne sees workers who are also mothers as having a better overall vision of the job and perhaps as being a bit more cautious in making judgements about parents than other staff. This is an important issue we will return to later, as the relationship between workers and the mothers (and occasional fathers) of the children they look after is often full of tensions, and the site of a great deal of blame on both sides.

Marie, another worker who is also a parent, feels a similar way.

> *Yarrow: Part of that for me is about thinking about different experiences really young teachers have, [compared] with people like yourself with a lot of experience, as well as being a parent yourself, and some...*
>
> *Marie: It makes an enormous difference. I didn't have these sorts of questions and conversations as a young teacher, and certainly being a parent has changed the way parents view me – absolutely!* [laughs] *Oh well, there's got to be some benefits to growing old.* (Marie, 40s)

Marie's comment makes apparent that being a mother is as much about legitimacy as a caregiver in the eyes of parents, as it is about the additional understanding that Dianne implies mothers might have. Marie's comment is a reminder that workers struggle to feel respected in their role – as 'just babysitters' – and that the role of mother often has a symbolic value in society much higher than that of childcare work (Arnup, 1994; Chesley, 2011).

"I can't wait until I have children"

As a result, among the workers that were not mothers, some expressed a wish for the sense of legitimation that might come with that. Jeni was one of the most qualified of the interviewees, having earned an early childhood degree while working part time in childcare;

> *Yarrow: Um... do you ever get asked for advice on parenting, from parents?*

> *Jeni: Um... no, not so far. I do know some of the teachers that I work with have had that happen to them, but not me personally.*
>
> *Yarrow: Probably because you're a bit younger, am I right?*
>
> *Jeni: That'd be it exactly, and I've only just started, and* I haven't got kids of my own...*'* (Jeni, 20s, emphasis added).

Jeni undermines her authority and her cultural capital in assuming that she was a less useful resource to parents because she was not a mother. This reinforces the point made in the previous chapter about professionalisation. Jeni is one of the most 'professionalised' of the field, with a high degree of educational capital for someone working in childcare, and yet she appears to see her value as deriving from outside that frame, from the gendered attributes mothers are assumed to embody.

Samantha is even more explicit about this as a process of legitimation or, in her case, delegitimation.

> *I think that... you know, working alongside... another teacher who is a parent... the words from, the advice from her is so much more taken on board, than the advice from me,* which I completely understand*, um... and I think that* I can't wait until I have children*, so that that can be me...* (Samantha, 30s, emphasis added)

Not only can Samantha identify how some workers are valued by parents more highly because of their presumed qualification as mothers but she suggests that she 'completely understand(s)' this. This is one of the contradictions that women experience regarding the 'non-work' of mothering. Although the skills learned in mothering may well make you a better childcare worker, as respondents acknowledge, such non-work is not generally seen as building valued capital, and to suggest otherwise in job interviews may invite ridicule (Grace, 1998).

So although Samantha comes across as a highly committed worker, with the ability to reflect critically on all aspects of childcare work, she 'can't wait' to have children so that she can gain the legitimacy of being a mother. In childcare, unlike most other forms of work, mothering seems to be a valued qualification, perhaps more so than early childhood training. Whether such an aspiration is possible for male workers is an open question, given the lack of male workers within this research. While recent trends towards more involved fathering (e.g., Chesley, 2011) might suggest this is possible, discourses of intensive mothering suggest that legitimacy derives from a particularly female-gendered notion of parenting (Murray, 1998).

Classed cultures of mothering

In talking about mothering it is important not to make presumptions about this as a practice, as if it can be taken-for-granted. As Lareau (2000, 2003) has argued in her work, mothering takes on classed attributes, with particular classed cultures of parenting growing out of the constraints and expectations within particular groups. She identified a broad division between

two cultural logics of parenting. One, associated with more privileged parents[23], she calls 'concerted cultivation', while parents with less cultural and economic capital emphasises the 'accomplishment of natural growth' (Lareau, 2003). Lareau takes a neutral stance to both sorts of parenting, reflecting her ethnographic approach. However most understandings of parenting are highly normative, and there are strong emotions about good and bad mothering that often have classed overtones (Gillies, 2007). I suggest that these arguments about 'good' and 'bad' mothers have their own reflection within childcare, with a similar pressure to be a good caregiver. These are specifically gendered as well as classed expectations around caregiving. Research shows that men do not experience these expectations as either fathers (T. Miller, 2011), or as childcare workers (Cameron, 2006).

Workers in this study are caught up in these normative debates about mothering, as they understand their own work through the frame of these competing logics of parenting. Many reflected on their own experience of childhoods whose classed logic seemed to be about the accomplishment of natural growth;

> *when I was a child, a million years ago... we ran free. We got filthy, we came home, we had a tub... you know, dinner and bed. Whereas now... it's, um... they play mainly inside, they play with the computer games, and... the videos, the television, and that sort of thing* (Mirjeta, 60s)

> *I don't know, when we were growing up it was a lot more stern, and it was okay to yell at your kids, and... things like that, and it worked out for our generation, but... I don't know, with the new generation, it just seems like... they're really spoilt for choice, so... I don't know, I can't really comment on that really, it's just... that's a tricky one* (Jeni, 20s)

> *I grew up in a generation where we... you know, entertained ourselves, and didn't really watch TV, and we just went out and got dirty, and... I think that's... a shame that that's not happening. Children don't have the freedom to do that anymore. But yes, I, I think children have too many things, parents are just ferrying children, here, there, and everywhere for activities that really don't have any more benefit than just... having fun at home with a parent, or a sibling, or... someone to come over and play with* (Dianne, 40s)

All of these workers are wrestling with the changing nature of childhood, and what this means for how adults should behave in raising children, and as Jeni observes, it is tricky. The sorts of non-intensive mothering that they received – the accomplishment of natural growth – are usually seen as inadequate (bad mothering) in the terms of contemporary discourses of intensive mothering.

There are no easy answers for how workers should be as caregivers. Many have experienced childhoods that reflect, according to Lareau (2003), the logic of particular regions in social space associated with little access to valued capital. Yet these experiences of childhood were rich and meaningful to the workers we saw above, and they question the expectations that are increasingly associated with mothering (Lawler, 2000). Hays (1996) discusses the classed aspects of intensive mothering expectations, showing that particular

privileged-class notions of how mothering ought to be done become viewed by all mothers as something to aspire to. For mothers without economic capital, or other resources they can draw on, the demands of concerted cultivation remain almost impossible (see especially Lareau, 2003, p. Ch.4). Yet they feel judged by others and themselves if they don't live up to these (frequently unrealistic) expectations.

Anne, who came into childcare as a result of her commitment to her daughter, has had to reflect on her own mothering in relation to the expectations of others, and in light of what she has learnt through her work;

> *Anne: Um... I found it was stressful enough with my daughter doing ballet, that was one day a week. You know, the hair had to be up, the tutu thing has to be perfect, everything had to be lacquered back. It's hard work, but I think it's a lot of social, um, social tickery, shall we say, for parents. So that they can tick, tick, I've done this, I've done that. My child does this, this, this and this, aren't I a good parent?*
>
> *Yarrow: There is pressure, isn't there, often... from the kids, to do things their friends are doing... or from other parents.*
>
> *Anne: And I think it's excellent, that children have extra-curricular interests, but... if it's overdone, and if it's too young, then it's... I think that just builds a lot of stress into life, and life's getting more stressful. And... if you build it into their life at an young age, it's sort-of... patterned into their system forever...* (Anne, 50s)

Anne, whose daughter is now an adult, has had a long time to reflect on the demands on mothers. She certainly felt that demand to fill others' expectations ('social tickery') and be the good mother. Many of the interviewees, drawing on their experience of their own less-intensive childhoods, as well as their knowledge as committed workers, seem concerned about the pressures towards concerted cultivation, and the stress this can put on children and their mothers.

Childcare as a qualification for mothering

Understanding of early childhood teaching and of mothering have informed each other extensively over the last century and a half (Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000; Hardyment, 2007; Yeo, 2005). I have suggested that some workers desire the extra credibility of motherhood, yet interestingly, others find that the skills they have learnt on the job are useful to them at home with their own children.

> *it's helped me to... realise that... that you can change what your natural reaction is, to things, so when I start to feel like, like when I'm stressed, and I start to react, negatively, then I think, 'I don't have to be like that!' um... and even to a certain extent at home as well, I, I do that now* (Rachel, 40s)
>
> *I think I do a lot of things, based on my professional knowledge. One of my parents asked if I find it any easier to relate to parents now that I'm a parent. And I said, 'Sometimes it makes it harder, because... I... I see that I'm doing it right!* [laugh] (Lauren, 30s)

Osgood, in her extensive study of the lives of nursery workers in the UK, noted a similar phenomenon;

> *Whilst nursery work becomes readily constructed through maternalistic discourses, so the authoritative discourses of ECEC practices come to inflect maternal practices and subjectivities* (Osgood, 2012, p. 101)

To me this suggests the very real authority of the committed worker, and the expertise they develop on the job. This underscores the point about workers' sense of personal commitment, with their skills being valued enough that they will practise them in their own mothering as well (Sayer, 2011b).

Gender, care and responsibility

As we saw in the last chapter, committed workers invest in themselves as responsible people, in order to gain a sense of worth in the eyes of others. One of the prime ways of doing this is to demonstrate a high degree of responsibility for children. However there is distinct risk in this. Bubeck argues that '[c]aring as an activity, disposition, and attitude forms a central part of probably all cultural conceptions of femininity and is virtually absent from, or even incompatible with, conceptions of masculinity' (1995, p. 160). Her work demonstrates that 'choosing' to care is how women are conscripted into their gendered roles, whether mothering or the paidwork of childcare. The naturalisation of gender happens through expectations of care, and Bubeck (1995) argues that the willingness to care forms a fundamental divide between those whose caring labour will be exploited and those who let themselves be cared for. In taking up responsibility within childcare, with the caring labour that this involves, workers succeed in gaining a sense of self-worth, but at the cost of reinforcing both classed and gendered exploitation.

This can be seen in an example from Rachel's experience. In a long passage she describes the distress of a child being left by a parent, and how she steps in to help some of her colleagues. However this particular child is far more distressed than most children in this situation, and the process ends up taking much longer than she expected;

> *but then if I had to get up, and move to another situation, it* [the crying] *would start again, so then I was like, I just started to pre-empt, and then said, 'I'm just moving over here, if you want to stay here, you can still see me, because I'll just be there' and in the end, because it was starting to work I... I had work to do in the office, but I just had to commit to that whole morning with her, because if I didn't, it would have undone everything.* (Rachel, 40s)

As the quote shows, Rachel is privileging her care for this child at the expense of the work that she needs to get done that morning. Her responsibility has consequences that would not be experienced by someone less caring or who was more focused on the organisation's needs than the emotional needs of a child.

Unlike the cost to Rachel, which possibly involved appearing deficient administratively, sometimes responsibility towards others involves emotional costs. Amber describes the relentless of these caregiving expectations and the realities of what needs to get done;

> *And... you know... and of course once you've calmed that child down, you don't even really check in to yourself, to calm yourself down, before you've got to go and... serve lunch, or make play-dough, or break up another fight or* [laughs wryly] *whatever else in going on in the room. So it can be... oh, physically demanding, and of course emotionally demanding, to... you know, not have that time to think, 'oh wow! That was full-on!' and off I go to do something else...* (Amber, 20s)

Amber is invested in the importance of caring for children, as well as handling all the other routine tasks of the day. She is engaging in hard emotional labour, in managing the child's feelings as well as her own (Hochschild, 1983). But as she acknowledges, it comes at the cost of her own physical and emotional well-being (Husso & Hirvonen, 2012).

At times this responsibility is explicitly shaped by the power relations of the childcare field, due to the attitudes that parents have in regard to their 'babysitters'. It is this sort of attitude that Mirjeta experiences at her centre;

> *'I want my child to learn manners, it's your job to teach them', 'I want my child toilet-trained, it's your job to do it'. Aaah, we've got a lot of that...* (Mirjeta, 60s)

Although Mirjeta and other committed workers will take up these responsibilities, and do them expertly, what she points to is the lack of respect that workers experience in such low-valued work. Although being a committed worker may accrue some subcultural capital within the field, these parents represent the low value of childcare work within the field of power.

Responsibility, authority, and the mothering role

Although there are many similarities between the intensive expectations of mothers and childcare workers, there is one important difference between them. Workers take up responsibility for children, but they do so with a much more limited power than do mothers (Wrigley, 1995). Dianne explains the different underlying expectations of mothers and of caregivers;

> *I still always think it's the quality... you can be a crap parent at ho... you can have a child at home every day, and not... interact at all, or... to, to the extreme of mistreating children... not everybody who stays at home with their child provides.... a fantastic experience for their child either, but there's still this idea that that's where children need to be, and child protection still, you know, always go back on the fact that the parent has the right, to have the child, and I don't always believe that that's right either. Sometimes you give up your rights when*... we don't get a second chance here, if we did the wrong thing by a child*, and yet a parent's...* (Dianne, 40s, emphasis added)

Dianne points to a very real phenomenon in the lives of workers. Although there are indeed intensive expectations of mothers, and they certainly experience some scrutiny from others (e.g., M. Nelson, 2009), there is nonetheless much of their life that stays in the private

sphere. They are also seen as the ultimate 'law-maker' for their child, in ways that childcare workers never have access to (Murray, 2001).

Lea notices this lack of power here, as she tries to get parents to take responsibility for their child's behaviour;

> *I often experienced parents brushing off many important conversations us as educators had with them because they seemed to have a more "it's all good" attitude, when frankly sometimes it wasn't okay - especially when their child was displaying behaviors that were endangering other children or staff... Or perhaps even spitting into people's faces.* (Lea, 20s)

This is one of those situations where even though the committed worker in Lea sees the disciplinary strategies that might be effective, she is limited in being able to implement these without the parents' cooperation.

Childcare workers are willing to take responsibility, and generally exercise it well, despite the scrutiny that Dianne alludes to. Unlike mothers, however, they lack ultimate authority, and it becomes a responsibility without much power. In the previous chapter, the audit processes of professionalism were shown to undermine the authority of teachers, and this is further undermined by the perceived role of parents as the final arbiter of young children's lives.

The compounding of classed and gendered pressures

The entwining of childcare work and mothering is particularly apparent in contemporary times around the intensiveness of the expectations upon all women. I suggest that there is a dual logic in this, driven by classed and gendered relations. Dominant-class notions of effective child-rearing (i.e., concerted cultivation) shape notions of professional practice for childcare workers (Osgood, 2005), as well as disciplining those mothers who cannot hope to achieve these standards in domestic life (Hays, 1996, 2000; Lareau, 2003). On the level of gender, women cannot expect to escape the demands of intensive mothering, whether they 'choose' to stay at home, or do paid-work and utilise childcare (Armstrong, 2006).

In this section I want to show that the gendered power relations inherent in unrealistic expectations of intensive mothering are exacerbated by the classed power relations of childcare. Intensive caregiving expectations carry with them similar expectations of mothering, with an extra layer of domination as result of the low status of childcare workers.

Feeling the pressure

Childcare workers certainly feel the intensity of their role, and the ways this is tied into the need to care. Lea describes it this way;

> *I think it's quite... it's a high pressure job, as well, um... you may not be the CEO of a company, but... there's a lot of responsibility in what we do... and... yeah, there's emotional, kind-of family structures at home, or family situations at home... it does spill onto the children, and then that does affect us.... as staff, as well, so... In my time I've definitely dealt with a lot of emotions, from families, yeah...* (Lea, 20s)

Just as mothers tend to be responsible for the emotional management of their households, so workers take on the emotional responsibility for all the children in their care, and this often extends to caring for parents as well. Grace (1998) underlines this point, showing that working with preschool age children is the most demanding time-wise of any age-group, and how invisible this remains when childcare remains seen as non-work, whether paid or unpaid.

As Mia sees it, it is the relational aspect that makes the role particularly intense;

> *well I guess we work with... people, first of all, we work with children, we don't work with data and computers, and things like that, so... it's constant... we don't have moments of... you know when you're in an office job and you think, 'Oh, I'll take an extra lunch break, or go back later, or I'll make a personal phone call now, or, 'I've got a headache, I'll break for coffee now'? We don't have those luxuries... yeah, just... in there, you see, it's constant, if it's not children, it's parents, if it's not parents it's... you know, in your head you're constantly thinking, 'Okay, I've got to get more documentation on this child, on that child, on this child, and... um... I dunno, I just think our job's very... demanding, in the sense that... I mean, there are other jobs that are demanding as well, but ours is constant...* (Mia, 40s, Greek)

In Mia's account can be seen clearly how the demands of gendered forms of care ('working with people') are accentuated by the classed demands of 'professional' job expectations ('more documentation'). The issue of breaks is important, because these always need to be relieved by another worker, and often these will be casual staff. About a third of the respondents talked about their feelings about work intensity in regard to these casual staff, because these workers are not experienced or competent enough. 'Breaks' then become stressful, as permanent staff cannot fully trust those who are supposed to be relieving them.

Intensification, caring and audit culture

Part of the stress of childcare work in a contemporary era is the ramping up of expectations, running parallel with the increasing demands of 'professional mothering' (Vincent & Ball, 2006). Much of this is a result of an audit culture, in which workers must not only be delivering quality care, but be able to prove this, however difficult such proof of 'quality' can be in carework occupations (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Drudy, 2008; Osgood, 2010). The job becomes intense because workers are committed, both to the children, and to their own sense of being responsible.

Many are concerned about the way the demands made by bureaucrats impact on the ability to be good caregivers. Abbie and Dianne brought this issue up in the focus group;

> *Abbie: I think the paperwork takes away from the heart of... like I feel like... I'm sitting in this windowless office, writing learning stories that I reckon parents don't really care about – they wanna see the photos, they wanna hear the stories, they don't wanna read through twenty-five of my made-up, well, observed, stories... I think the documentation side of it, that is going to make us more professional, and seen as educators, and all of that, really takes away from the joy of the job. It does....*
>
> *Dianne: People are leaving the industry, there's some, you know... for that reason. So, yes, I can see there's... very positive things about the... the NQF, and the new*

> *framework, as far as looking at children's learning, I think that's a really important thing, but I don't know if we're going about it the right way...*

As Abbie and Dianne's words suggest, workers feel conflicted about their role in childcare. While they can see that there is value to be had in the eyes of others through performing these 'professional' duties well, they seem unsure about the purpose behind them. As Abbie observes, what is the point of documentation that is not seen or appreciated by those for whom it is apparently intended? It seems wrong to invest time and effort into fulfilling audit processes, when the immediate demands of relationships with children and families remain pressing (Husso & Hirvonen, 2012).

Selflessness and shadow working

The last issue that I want to address in regard to intensive caregiving expectations concerns the altruism, the focus on others, that is essential to this work. Carework is not done for the exchange-value, which is poor across almost all occupations of this sort (England, et al., 2002). However, it has a powerful use-value, which I argue provides the emotional charge behind intensive caregiving. Firstly, to be caring is seen as fundamentally worthwhile, and it functions as the means of proving respectability and responsibility within childcare work. Secondly, caring for others tends to provide immediate rewards in terms of the gratitude that those being cared-for express. As one of the interviewees noted, this is a powerful motivation;

> *One of my concerns for childcare workers is that... young women... move into childcare... they have their emotional needs met because they are nurturing, they are cuddling children, they are getting the affection, and then suddenly they find themselves at thirty years of age, with no social network, no children of their own, they invested their heart in childcare, they've got no payback for it, long term payback.* (Anne, 50s)

Anne wonders what the costs are for those workers who come to rely on this emotional reward, and invest in their relationships at work at the expense of their own needs.

This is an important point. The discourse of intensive mothering is aimed at keeping women focused on the needs of their children, allowing men to continue to exploit this (constructed) altruism (Hays, 2000), as well as restricting women's ability to participate fully in the field of power, through more influential paid work (Craig, 2006). As Prentice observes, discussing mothering, '[a] long history of maternal regulation has regularly led to the condition of compulsory altruism' (2009, p. 703). This comes through in the values Anne identifies as being important for her motivation to work;

> *[quietly thoughtful] What values do I draw on? Oh, goodness me! See I would go back to that, being related to... Christian values, um.... love, acceptance, honesty, I suppose. Valuing kindness. Kindness is an underrated thing in the world, isn't it?* (Anne, 50s)

Anne identifies the sorts of gendered qualities that women are expected to display in their families, as well as in their caring roles at work. As noted earlier, this is not fundamentally about gender, but about the willingness or unwillingness to undertake care for others, but it does underpin much of the gendered inequality in society (Bubeck, 1995). The pay-off for women with intensive mothering is to have access to the validation that comes from construction of motherhood as saintly or heroic (Grace, 1998, 2001).

This chapter demonstrates that any similar validation for childcare workers remains elusive. Childcare workers cannot claim access to the saintliness of motherhood, because they are tainted by the money they earn in this role, however poor the wages. Yeo (2005) has demonstrated how this has been a long-time tension within 'women's work', and Ailwood (2008) shows how this has played out within childcare in Australian contexts. Yet the rewards of the money are not always enough to keep workers in the job, as the figures on turnover seem to imply (Jovanovic, 2013). The gendered altruism that pushes mothers into their intense efforts seems to be exactly what motivates workers in their role. The result is what Simms (2006) calls an 'exploitation of vocational passion', of a selfless commitment to this work.

Shadow-work

Even though the altruistic motivations of mothers and caregivers may have the same roots, the recognition received by these two groups is very different. While images of mothers as saintly are longstanding[24] and were particularly prominent in the Victorian era (Patmore, 1854; Yeo, 2005), no similar moral heroism attaches to childcare work in the modern era. As Macdonald (1998, 2010) argues, many caring roles become 'shadow work', a form of labour that risks generating little or no capital. Describing childcare work she suggests that 'employers expect them to make themselves invisible, both in the psychic lives of the children in their care and in the social lives of the families that are their workplace' (Macdonald, 1998, p. 34).

Ruby, for example, has felt this lack of acknowledgement, and the pressure to be invisible;

> *it was more like, it was more like a general dismissiveness, as if you're a nothing, you know, like as if, 'You're nothing, and I don't care, so... you better fix everything, because... you're ridiculous', you know, that sort of intimidation, of making you feel little... when you do have issues with parents I think that's always... the approach they'll take with... dealing with you, if they just, you know, they'll just be like, 'Well, I'm not going to look at you, or... acknowledge that you're there, or...'* (Ruby, 20s)

Ruby is describing her feelings as a result of one bad relationship with a mother, who did not respect her work or her opinion. However I argue there is also classed contempt at work in the mother's dismissal of her, which may be affected by the fact that Ruby's workplace services a particularly high-income group of parents.

Macdonald's (2010) analysis of shadow mothering shows that the invisibility of childcare workers is a necessary part of the structure that society creates to uphold particular myths of

motherhood. As Uttal (1996) observes in her detailed analysis of caregiver-mother relations, many mothers need to construct the role of childcare workers as insignificant - as simply 'custodial care' - in order to feel that they are still good mothers, despite using childcare. Childcare workers certainly seem to believe that it is important to downplay their own contributions in order to make the mothers they work with feel better about themselves, as others have observed (Murray, 1998). For example;

> *if the parent comes in, or the phone.... you've got to... break off from whatever and spend time with them, and they will feel reassured, because if we're looking after their children, you know, it's all that sort of thing... and you've got to think about everybody else's feelings, not just yourself* (Lisa, 40s)

Lisa here is clear that she should suppress her own need for validation in order to make parents feel valued. In doing so she is playing into the society-wide beliefs about the value of mothering, and the lack of value of childcare work.

Other workers talked about their strategies of downplaying their own skills, in order to care for the feelings of the mothers that they work with;

> *It's reassurance for the parents, to know that they're doing something... right, and you're not judging them, you're just there to support them, and... yeah, it's important to try to make them aware of that as well. Because you're not saying, 'Hey, I'm the professional. You need to do it my way.' But... 'You're doing a good job, keep on going'* (Lauren, 30s)

Lauren is being compassionate in making those mothers she is working with feel better about the job they are doing, but this is a double-edged sword. There are times, as we have seen in previous chapters, where workers may need to mobilise some authority so that parents take what they have to say seriously. This can be difficult to do if they have colluded in shadow-mothering, making their own role and expertise invisible.

Absence of reciprocity

The point about shadow-work is that there is a lack of reciprocity in the relationship. Reciprocity is a process that signifies the equal status of those concerned (Skeggs, 2010). Dianne sees the lack of reciprocity in the relationship very clearly;

> *I think parents feel that we owe them more in information that they owe to us. They're dropping that child off and paying for that care... and that's what I want, but I don't really need to give you anything else, you know. So... I don't know that they contribute that well, and part of accreditation is parent involvement, parent input... but you're really chasing parents for... you know, any kind of involvement in the centre* (Dianne, 40s)

Interestingly, Dianne sees this explicitly in terms of the power-relations that come from perceptions of 'employer-employee' relationships. We saw in the previous chapter that the funding models and structure of the childcare system, which differ from the compulsory school sector, can add to the sense of powerlessness felt by workers, and the classed relations that they experience as a result. Workers' willingness to be altruistic in this situation,

in endlessly providing support and information even where this is not reciprocated, comes at the cost of their own sense of value, and the visibility of their skills.

The consequences of shadow-working are serious. Adding to the lack of status that comes from engaging in 'women's work', workers actively collude in downplaying their own expertise in a number of ways. This contributes to the classed perception of childcare work as menial work, because it ignores the skills and knowledge accumulated by committed workers. I suggest that in demonstrating a highly-gendered form of altruism (vocational passion) they succeed in gaining moral worth, but it involves playing the games of shadow-work which then results in further devaluation, a form of classed invisibility (Charlesworth, 2000).

Partnerships and intensive expectations

Having examined the key aspects of intensive caregiving – the responsibility, intensity and altruism that defines it – I want to look at one particular aspect of the childcare field, namely 'partnerships'. Partnerships are often heavily emphasised within literature dealing with the professionalisation of childcare work, being seen as a marker of responsible caregiving, and reciprocal relationships with families (Douglass & Gittell, 2012; Keyser, 2006; Scott, et al., 2007). Although questions have been raised about the viability of the partnership model in research on schooling (e.g., Blackmore & Hutchinson, 2010; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002), and certainly tensions are clear in home-based childcare settings (Cheever, 2002; Uttal, 1996; Wrigley, 1995), such doubts seems to be rare when discussing centre-based childcare. Vincent and Ball (2006), in their exploration of childcare use from the perspective of parents, show that the 'professional mothering' (Vincent, 2010) of more privileged mothers introduces a high level of anxiety into their choice of childcare settings.

The taken-for-granted model of partnership, which presupposes some sort of equality between the partners, is revealed as problematic when considering all the emotions generated on both sides of this relationship, not just anxiety. Sayer (2005, 2007, 2011b) has written extensively about the ways that classed (and other) inequalities are manifested in the emotions we feel about them. In this section I want to examine how these emotions are felt in the caregiving process, because this illustrates the particularities of the intensity and pressure felt by all those caught up within these power relations. Although there were many emotions expressed within the interviews, including anger, disgust, anxiety, satisfaction and frustration, I will examine a particularly common cluster of feelings centred around the blame that often occurs in relationships between mothers and childcare workers.

Horizontal hostility – the blame game

The idea of women blaming each other rather than the cause of the problem has been a longstanding theme in feminist writing. This is often conceptualised as horizontal hostility (e.g., Hoffnung, 2005; Kennedy, 1970; Tronto, 1994), emphasising the difference between these counterproductive acts, and the more enabling hostility that could be directed against

those doing the oppressing or exploiting. Such horizontal hostility is apparent in this study between mothers and workers, even though the pressures on both as a result of intensive mothering/caregiving expectations are so similar (Page & Elfer, 2013 note a similar phenomenon in their study).

A number of participants told stories about being blamed by mothers for things that had happened, such as Kelly's experience;

> *anyway, eventually she just came to me, and she was really angry, basically telling me that I couldn't do my job, and said that if I don't make her child play with someone different, then... that she's going to pull her out, and that's the end of it* (Kelly, 30s)

What the parent was reacting to was the choices made by her own child, and her unhappiness with this. The root of this unhappiness is the unrealistic expectation that mothers are responsible for the outcomes of their children's lives, their imagined success or failure. However, I suggest that Kelly was made the brunt of this mother's anger and dissatisfaction, in a way reminiscent of unequal (gendered) domestic relationships, rather than a partnership.

Samantha's experience shows the complexities in this blame game, where the mother was upset enough to withdraw her child from the centre;

> *she came to me crying, she was saying, 'This has happened, what can I do? I just don't understand.' So I just jumped straight on board, and said, 'Look, this is... these are some of the options, I'm... behind you one hundred percent, you know...' and still... turned up the next day saying, 'I just think you must think I'm the worst parent ever. You... you don't even like my child, I'm going to leave the centre' and I was pretty much hands up in the air going, 'What? You know, you came to me for help, yesterday, and...'* (Samantha, 30s)

As Samantha explains, the mother blamed both the workers ('you don't like my child') as well as herself ('I'm the worst parent ever'), providing a compelling reminder of the ways that intensive expectations impact on women, undermining their confidence in their childrearing practices.

Workers feel a similar pressure to provide successful outcomes for children as mothers experience, and can often resort to blame when they feel frustrated. Lisa talks about her frustrations with trying to have a genuine partnership with parents;

> *our parents, are all working parents... you know, they're not there... I mean, they have got to be there... but they're paying for that service, so they can go to work... and make a living. So... it's, it's sometimes really hard... to... have... a really really good parent partnership where they're coming here and doing things, because most of them work throughout the day, so.... You know, and... when they're not working, if they're at home with the child, they'll not spend ch... time with the child, so it's... sometimes hard* (Lisa, 40s)

Lisa would like to feel supported in what she is trying to achieve with the toddlers in her group, but runs up against what seems like parent apathy. Although she sees it as her

responsibility to improve the relationship with the parents, it is hard not to let it slip over into blame ("they'll not spend time with the child").

Others are a bit more blunt in their judgements, seeing parents as careless or neglectful;

> *Put it this way, some parents don't care... yeah, some parents... some parents couldn't give two hoots* (Andrea, 30s)

> *there is a kid in my class at the moment and she barely turns up to school, when she does she's just absolutely tired, she hasn't got lunch, her parents just... you know... they don't seem to even be involved with her life, at all, and that gets into emotion, but she's a lovely girl, but she just... doesn't stand a chance, in comparison to the other kids, just because of how her parents...* (Jeni, 20s)

In this second example, it seems particularly likely that Jeni is holding the mother responsible - though saying 'parents' - because fathers are not usually assumed to be making lunches for their children attending care.

Managing injuries

One of the more common causes of blame was those times when a child was injured. This is when intensive caregiving expectations come most into focus, as workers must deal with complex feelings about what is demanded of them in their childcare role. Workers do almost all the things that mothers (and the occasional father) do, but without ultimate authority for the child, and with the added expectation of fairly constant scrutiny. This scrutiny has increased in part due to the need to meet accreditation processes (Osgood, 2010), but also out of heightened concern for safety (Little, 2010), as discussed in the previous chapter. A number of researchers have noted the increasing surveillance of those caring for children as a result of these worries about child safety, including technological innovations such as 'nanny-cam' (McDowell, 2007; M. Nelson, 2009)

Abbie, reflecting on the differences between her experience of caregiving for her nephews and the heightened intensity of her working life, observes;

> *Abbie: ...at work you're more concerned about the safety and wellbeing of everyone, because you don't want people to have a bad day, but you don't want anything bad to happen, because it's not just... what happens in that room, it goes much further than that as well. And even with the smallest of things, some parents get so upset about... a scratch, and you think, 'Well, they're learning to walk, and they've just tripped over.' And we actually did write it up in the accident book, and you signed it, but then what happens is they go home to... the Dad, or the Mum, or whoever didn't pick them up and...*

> *Yarrow: And then they'll talk...*

> *Abbie: 'Why didn't you ask this? Why didn't you ask that?'* (Abbie, 20s)

For a mother, her toddler falling may be distressing but it is not an earth-shattering event. A cuddle, and perhaps some simple first-aid, and the incident is forgotten. For workers it is not that simple. Apart from the mundane administrative side – all accidents are supposed to be

recorded in great detail – every staff member has the additional burden of telling the parents what happened.

This conversation is rarely easy, no matter how experienced the worker (Murray, 1998). Mothers can often feel guilty putting their children into the care of others (Fothergill, 2013), and that guilt comes into intense focus when their child is injured, as if the mother would have been able to prevent it herself (for a discussion of adult perceptions of safety and risk, see; Wyver, et al., 2010). Workers know this well, as Abbie's words indicate, and must spend additional mental and emotional energy calculating the least distressing ways to break this news to parents. This anticipation of an awkward conversation to come at pick-up time can cloud the whole day, and is often quite mentally exhausting, as was noted by about half of the interviewees.

For non-trivial injuries, parents must be called, and this compounds the strain on workers. Murray notes that it is part of workers' responsibilities to call parents and that, '[s]ome parents reacted very angrily when told about an injury received by their child' (1998, p. 157). A mother, who may be in the middle of something else at work, and some distance away, will be distressed to hear of the injury, and this conversation is hard *in itself*. Then that mother will often worry further about it as she hurries back to the childcare centre, and this worry comes into sharp relief when she sees the actual injury. The time between phone call and the arrival of the mother is distressing, as workers try and second-guess all the various nuances of emotional reaction they might witness, such as anger, extreme grief, coldness, or whatever, and how best to manage such feelings in the parent. This intense emotion and feeling-management occurs about injuries that are to a great extent unavoidable, no matter how vigilant the caregivers. Skeggs (1997), in talking about the training of women for childcare, discusses the intense focus on injuries to children, and the pathologisation of the 'bad' caregiver that is presumed to lie behind it. Even though injury rates in childcare are low, and the injuries usually minor (Little, 2010), the effect of intensive caregiving expectations and workers' own commitment to feeling responsible is to heighten anxiety around this issue. Ultimately it looms larger in workers' minds than it needs to, given the usually superficial injuries concerned.

Managing (emotional) injuries

Given how familiar workers become with these highly-charged moments in childcare, it is not surprising that they develop all sorts of strategies to try and mitigate the impact on themselves, and the mother. So Lisa, who is very experienced at this process, describes how she mentors the younger workers in her room;

> *so you've got to be... diplomatic, but be able to tell them. You know, I always say to the girls, 'Always start with a positive, before you say anything negative.'*

because as she acknowledges;

> *it mainly seems to be Mums to be quite honest, that... struggle a lot, over that... with... guilt...* (Lisa, 40s)

What Lisa describes is a fairly simple strategy of emotional management, but this will then, as various interviewees note, be tailored more specifically to a situation, depending on whether the mother is a worrier, is fairly calm, quick to anger, or whatever. The child also comes into this, with babies, female children, and children with chronic illness seen as more vulnerable, and the injury more distressing, than with older, rough-and-tumble boys, for whom the stereotypes of gender acknowledge a certain amount of risk and injury, as in the common belief that "boys will be boys" (Langford, 2010, p. 117).

Lea here describes an example with a specific child, and his parents, and their usual reaction;

> *his behaviours kind-of... explode... in, you know, in the actual setting, and then... yeah, then we have to talk to parents about it, and they get emotional about it, kind-of defensive, and then, um... we have to deal with that aftermath of working with them as well* (Lea, 20s)

Lea indicates how workers are always paying attention to the 'aftermath' of any incident with a child, and the consequences it will have for the ongoing relationship. While a worker's apparent caregiving responsibilities are to the child, they end up caring for parents as well.

One of the most difficult injury situations, discussed by a number of interviewees, is biting, because unlike one-off injury situations, this is often an ongoing behaviour management issue, as well as injury management issue (Murray, 2001). In addition there is often a need to manage the emotions not just of the injured child's parents, but the parents of the perpetrator of the biting as well. Abbie makes this observation;

> *if I've got to tell a parent that, you know, your child's been biting continuously, or whatever, we've tried these strategies and... I wouldn't, it would never be the first time that I've spoken to them, though, if it's being caring... I don't always go in saying, 'Your child's terrible' because... the child's right there. You don't want them to think that just because they're biting that they're... the worst person in the world. I try and explain to the parents that it's the behaviour you don't like, not the child. The child you love, you'll always love, but the behaviour... isn't that great* (Abbie, 20s)

These parents may be just as distressed as those of the bitten child, but for a totally different reason, as they manage the complex shame of feeling that their child is acting violently (Sayer, 2005). As can be seen in this incident, Abbie focuses on caring for the parents, and reminding them what is important - the shared commitment to the wellbeing of the child.

There is also a pragmatic element to this, which requires the practical wisdom developed by the committed worker. Knowing how exhausting it is to manage all these emotions, workers become skilled at finding ways *not* to have to do so, if there is an alternative. This is how Brittany describes her approach;

> *I've noticed... throughout the year, that as soon as you notice the bite, like if you see it from a distance, a child bite another child, and um, you quickly go up to the, the*

> *child that's injured, um... say 'Are you okay?' Get a cold compress, and put it on the bite-mark... I notice if it's on there for at least... five to ten minutes, it can go away, the mark, which is good.* (Brittany, 20s)

While this is clearly good first-aid practice, there was a suggestion that what she is really seeking to do is manage the emotional impact of the injury on the child's mother. Although the actual pain the child experiences may be identical, workers do assess an injury based on its 'visual distress potential'. As one worker acknowledges about the difficulty of this particular issue, 'parents are very emotional about... um, biting issues you have in childcare, the victim of biting' (Dianne, 40s).

Later in the interview Dianne returns to this topic, and reaffirms how difficult it is for workers and families to see eye-to-eye on these sorts of issues;

> *Parents just don't get where you're coming from, and we kind-of don't... really... agree with what they're doing. Yeah, it's a tough one... especially if you've got really... if you've got behaviours like biting, is something that parents, um... don't know how to handle, but then... we deal with it all the time, so we should be good at it, we should know what to do. This is their first child, they've never experienced it, so they don't know. If I, if it was mine I'd probably bite them back at home, but I can't tell people to do that* [laughs]*... it does work, you know. But we don't, and we achieve a good result by not doing that. Um... but parents.... deal with it.... the wrong way to begin with, and then it just sort-of perpetuates the problem, so there's a lot of things, but, as I said, we are supposed to be the experts, because we've got sixty to seventy children here every day, and.... that's our job* (Dianne, 40s)

Dianne understands the complexities of these issues, and the different perspectives that parents are workers are coming from. She acknowledges the misunderstandings and blame that happens around sensitive issues like biting. Returning to Brittany's comment, in order to mitigate some of this blame she knows that telling the mother about the bite may be easier (for both parties) if the bite is a faded red mark rather than a livid bruise with clearly visible teeth-marks. This is also a way to manage the additional powerlessness of being a worker, through being responsible (and liable), but not ultimately responsible, as with the child's parents.

Vulnerability

Worker vulnerability is an aspect of childcare interactions that may not always be obvious. Times of heightened emotion in the relationship with families can be risky for workers, because it is their skills as a worker that are on the line. If a mother reacts badly to being told of an injury, for example, and is unable to acknowledge the inevitability of *some* injuries - as well as the role mother-guilt is playing in that for her - then she can make life very difficult for that worker. This could involve complaining to the service's management, or even reporting them to the government departments concerned with regulating childcare and child protection issues. This adds a layer of institutional power to the usual complications of intensive caregiving expectations.

Mirjeta, who has seen too much of this in her forty years of childcare work, explains one of the ways she seeks to guard against this sort of occupational vulnerability;

> *I've had to, at times, have one of the other girls... be listening... whether it be discreetly, in the bathroom, while a parent is talking to me, because I have had... a parent say that I said something... that I didn't, so... I always... the girls know... the particular parents, they, they've had the same thing happen to them, and they'll be discreetly doing something, so that there is... a back-up. And it's a shame that we need to do it, but you do* (Mirjeta, 60s)

This may seem risk-averse, and certainly Mirjeta seems to wish she didn't have to do it, but it is something she has had to learn to do for her own job security. Elsewhere in the interview she talks about the occasions when she has been wrongly accused of particular things, or simply was the victim of a misunderstanding that almost cost her the job.

Of course mothers have their own form of vulnerability due to intensive mothering expectations, being scrutinised and judged by other parents and sometimes the authorities (Blackford, 2009; Davies, 2012). However I suggest that workers are additionally vulnerable. Added to the gendered judgements that also render workers vulnerable are the sorts of classed judgements that come from doing menial and unvalued work. While mothers can sometimes be protected by the hallowed images of motherhood, workers are culturally tainted by the need for money, and the mercenary overtones of paid caring (Ailwood, 2008; Yeo, 2005).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how intensive mothering expectations form a powerful backdrop for the childcare field, and that workers in childcare centres feel a similar pressure to embody responsibility, to engage intensively, and to do so selflessly. Just as expectations of mothering have intensified, increasing pressure on women to become the perfect mother, so childcare workers have felt the pressures of rising expectations. These intensive caregiving expectations represent the gendered pressures that women feel in this work, paralleling the classed pressure to find value in respectability and responsibility that we saw in the previous chapter. These classed and gendered pressures together drive the cultural logic of child-rearing, which combines aspects of the classed demands of professionalism, and the gendered demands of mothering. I will return to this idea in the final chapter.

In trying to live up to being the perfect caregiver, the idea of mothering remains a key touchstone for those who work in the field. We saw how the status and skills of mothering were seen as an asset, with some workers being proud of having these skills, and others hoping to acquire that sense of legitimacy. Of course, only certain sorts of mothering are validated and workers sought to understand, as did those in Osgood's (2012) study, how their own experiences of being mothered, and what they had learnt from this, made sense in the light of the discourse of intensive mothering (Lawler, 2000).

This chapter highlights how the three aspects of intensive caregiving – responsibility, intensiveness, and selflessness – play out in the lived experience of childcare workers. In each I showed that gendered expectations abrade and inflame classed expectations in ways that increase pressure on workers. They have heavy responsibility without ultimate authority. They share with mothers the intensity of caring expectations, but reinforced by the threat of an audit culture, and exacerbated by the pressure to meet the simultaneous needs of large numbers of children. Lastly, they experience the same gendered expectations of selflessness, but are expected to make these altruistic efforts invisible, performing work in the shadows so that mothers feel good about themselves.

In turning the focus onto the expectations of 'partnership' between mothers and workers, I explained how these intensive expectations, whether of mothering or caregiving, fundamentally impact on the childcare field. Although day-to-day relationships may look harmonious, when difficult issues arise - such as injuries to children – this illusion falters. Mothers and workers necessarily feel strong emotions about their roles – after all, this is not just expected but required of them, if they are not to be judged negatively. These strong emotions then make it easy to blame each other for any problems experienced, and in this workers are inevitably the most vulnerable.

How workers are positioned within these relationships demonstrates that classed disadvantage aggravates gendered disadvantage, adding to their sense of occupational vulnerability. Nonetheless as committed workers they continue to respond to the demands made on them within the field. Although care for others is a key component of the subcultural capital that workers invest in, in the context of gendered work such altruism may be a disadvantage, making them unable to argue for better pay, while still not accruing the symbolic capital of motherhood. So they perform shadow-mothering, a form of intensive caregiving where all the rewards go to the parents, in terms of credit for a well-raised child, while the skills and expertise of workers go unrecognised.

In the next chapter I will look more closely at altruism and its role in the emotional capital of workers. I will argue that understanding the value of emotional capital to workers, and its role in their expertise, is fundamental to understanding the value of childcare work. In doing so I suggest that the classed and gendered location of childcare work can shed light on this phenomenon, and the mechanisms that underpin it.

Chapter 8: Ethical work

Introduction

I have demonstrated in the previous chapters that childcare workers are exploited in two separate and overlapping ways. The first is economically, where their low status as women, without access to significant capital, constrains them into work that is demanding and complex. It is work that requires increasing levels of qualifications, and yet lacks any acknowledgement of this in terms of pay and conditions. The second is culturally, where the association of this work with women leads to an assumption of its low value, so that workers are considered 'just babysitters', doing work 'that anyone can do' (but not everyone does). This combination of distributive disadvantage (working in an archetypally low-paid field) and pervasive misrecognition (in terms of the worth of what they do) represents a distinct intersection of classed and gendered disadvantage. This, I argue, is the childcare field, a region in social space shaped by the inequalities of social class and gender.

The low status of the childcare field is taken-for-granted within the field of power, and this is often reflected in the lack of respect of parent-users of childcare. Even some workers seem to have accepted this lack of value about their work, reflecting the power of this dominant discourse. In this chapter I will argue that this taken-for-granted lack of value must be challenged, and I do so by highlighting the complex and valuable work done by those interviewed in this research.

I showed in Chapter 6 that many interviewees already see their job as worthwhile, and invest in themselves as committed workers. This investment in being a committed worker functions as subcultural capital within the field, generating some respect from colleagues or employers, but little symbolic or economic capital beyond that. This chapter investigates *why* these women continue to do such difficult and supposedly unrewarding work. At the end of Chapter 5, many workers were seen to disengage from the field as a result. For committed workers however, they draw on their existing classed and gendered knowledge to create a distinctive set of practices that accomplish for them a sense of respectability and responsibility.

In encountering these practices as a researcher, I found the interviews with workers were infused with ethical and emotional awareness, especially when thinking about the value of the work. For example, Dianne, talking about the value she derived from her childcare studies, reflects;

> *I loved the course. I said, 'Even if I never work in childcare, I think it's the best parenting course you could ever do!' You come out of it, and I remember thinking at the time, 'I wish I had have done this before I had my child', you know, what a better parent I would have been... but I realised there's a reason why all these things happen... it's not just, there's a reason develop this way, and there's a reason why they behave that way, and when... when you've got that understanding...* (Dianne, 40s)

Just as Dianne wondered 'why all these thing happen', it seemed to me that there was something important going on that required understanding. In Chapter 6 I suggested that this form of subcultural capital – the committed worker – represents an alternate concept of expertise, and source of value, than the professionalism that has been promoted in the field. In this chapter I explain how this investment in subcultural capital constitutes an ethical practice, an engagement in the struggles of the social field, even if this aspect of what workers do often remains unacknowledged (Grace, 1998).

In the last of my research chapters, I will demonstrate that this ethical practice, which workers articulate through their emotional responses to different situations (Day, 2013), can be understood best through the concept of emotional capital. In doing so I expand on the existing work of feminist Bourdieusian scholars to show that emotional capital can function as an effective tool to challenge the perceived low-value of childcare work. Even though workers do not mobilise Bourdieusian language themselves, I argue that the committed workers in this study struggle against the maldistribution and misrecognition they encounter in their work.

One of the everyday problems for workers is the taken-for-granted nature of their jobs, and the emotional work in childcare is a particularly clear example of this. The emotional capital that women have, and earn, is often naturalised. Indeed a recent review of literature around emotions in childcare showed how 'care', and the emotional sides of this work, remain almost completely ignored in official documents (Elfer, 2013). One of the aims of this chapter is to denaturalise this emotional capital, so that it can be recognised as a valuable resource, in all its complexity (Bowman & Cole, 2009).

In doing so I draw on the theoretical understanding of emotional capital from Chapter 3, articulating how I use the concept in this chapter, and how the different understandings of this capital, as being a resource for others, or for the self, can explain different aspects of childcare work. I argue that reflexivity is a key element of emotional capital, constituting a *sine qua non* of this form of capital, distinguishing it fundamentally from the idea of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983, 2002). Using this skill of reflexivity, workers are able to understand the difficult situations they encounter, learn from them, and develop the embodied skills, such as insight or resilience, which will make them better able to handle such situations next time.

These everyday skills of emotional capital, I suggest, represent a form of alienated labour, in the sense that others, such as children or parents, are benefiting from the emotional efforts of workers. However, as an embodied capital, this does not make such work alienating necessarily, as these are valuable skills that can be satisfying to put into practice. However, there is always a risk that this work for others will generate resentment, due to the gap between the skills required and the minimal recognition received for having these skills.

The reflexivity that workers engage in generates increasingly nuanced understandings of their childcare work, and results in a clearly visible ethical orientation to their labours. It is

this ethical orientation - which allows workers to perceive a larger framework of values beyond the notion of babysitting - that answers the question of why anyone continues to do this work, especially with the levels of dedication seen in this study. In knowing for themselves why this work is so valuable, workers are able to put up with, though not resign themselves to, the poor conditions of the field. At its best, when this ethical orientation is widely shared within a particular workplace, it allows childcare workers the sense of collective satisfaction from an important job done well.

Emotional capital

In this chapter, I draw on the idea of emotional capital that has been developed by feminist scholars in recent decades (Allatt, 1993; Colley, 2006; Hutchison, 2012; McNay, 1999; Nowotny, 1981; O'Brien, 2008; Reay, 2000, 2004a). This takes Bourdieu's (1986) framework of capitals and extends it, acknowledging that Bourdieu's work has often struggled to include meaningfully the working lives and experiences of women. Given Skeggs' (2004a) argument that particular groups (women, non-white people, disabled people etc.) experience ongoing and systemic disadvantage in engaging in the game of capital accumulation, the idea of emotional capital is one attempt to redress these inequities.

Emotional capital has been viewed as a sub-type of social capital (Nowotny, 1981) or as cultural capital (Reay, 2000) and both arguments have some merit. These differing interpretations suggest the difficulty of subsuming emotional capital easily within any of Bourdieu's original categories, and for the purposes of this thesis emotional capital is considered a form of capital in its own right. Emotional capital is seen as an embodied form of capital, visible as a set of skills and dispositions that act as a resource in managing human relationships, and in understanding the self and others. This definition has most in common with Colley's (2006) mobilisation of this concept, in talking about the role of vocational training in shaping early childhood practitioners;

> *This analysis could explain the role of VET here as allowing young women – those with particular emotional resources suited to childcare – to develop and refine these resources, but only to deploy them as capital within a very restricted and subordinate field. They may, for example, exchange them for economic 'capital', but only for very low wages; or for more cultural capital, but only for vocational courses and at institutions that have relatively low status.* (2006, p. 25)

Colley's work expresses some important aspects of emotional capital, such as the ways access to it can be shaped by gender, as well as its current low status within the field of power.

This connection with gender is important, because the articulation of emotional capital represents a feminist engagement in the struggles of the social field, and aims to challenge the 'prior historical classificatory schemes of value' (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 75) that restrict the life-chances of many within society. All capitals, it must be remembered, are backed up by

systems of status and power that legitimate them, which is why many marginal and subcultural forms of capital remain unarticulated and undervalued (Bullen & Kenway, 2005; Skeggs, 2001), such as the idea of the committed work within childcare. The advantage of taking up emotional capital as a concept is that the resource (emotional ability) that it represents has not been highly valued historically within the field of power, and had often been actively disparaged[25]. Indeed, as many have noted, Bourdieu included, this has left these skills to be preferentially acquired by those most marginalised; not just women, but also other dominated groups (Bourdieu, 2001; Glenn, 2010; Husso & Hirvonen, 2012; Reay, 2004a; Waerness, 1984). The fact that emotional capital has not been highly-valued historically makes it a good tool for engaging in the struggles of the social field around the value of childcare, because its accessibility to women is greater, and it is clearly a resource with great practical value.

My aim in this chapter, therefore, is not to argue that women will naturally have more emotional capital. To do so is to reify the link between gender and emotion in ways that are not helpful, and this is one of the pitfalls with taking up notions of gendered capitals (Huppatz, 2009; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2011, 2013). Women, through their conscription into caring roles (Bubeck, 1995), are likely to acquire substantial holdings of emotional capital, and this form of capital constitutes a distinct and valuable asset to the field of childcare (and thus to governments who are promoting this). Therefore I believe there is a strong argument for childcare work to be valued more highly, in terms of both distribution and recognition. This argument is helped by parallel developments within other fields, such as management, with the dawning awareness that emotional skills, rather than merely detachment or authority, might be useful assets in the modern world (Baines, 2011; Bolton & Boyd, 2003; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Reay, 2004a). Drawing on McNay's (1999) claims about the ways that fields overlap and reinforce each other, I take an idea that potentially generates symbolic capital in other fields, such as management, and show how the same resource should generate comparable profit in the childcare field. From this perspective, emotional capital represents a way to express the complexities of childcare work in a concept that captures some of the historically-gendered aspects of these skills, but that can articulate them as distinctly valuable (as well as potentially achievable by anyone who chooses to engage in the necessary effort).

Two aspects of emotional capital are illustrated in this chapter, picking up on two distinctly different approaches in the literature. One sees this form of capital as primarily benefiting others (Hutchison, 2012; Reay, 2000, 2004a) while the alternate argument sees this capital as accruing within the self (Colley, 2006; Manion, 2007; O'Brien, 2008). When Bourdieu (1986) talks about capital as accumulated labour, he emphasises that this labour accumulates in products (the more classical Marxian approach), but also in the self. I want to suggest that all labour will have this dual property, to a greater or lesser extent, generating

not just the direct products of that labour, but also the skills that have been acquired through engaging in such work.

Within childcare, for example, well-behaved, emotionally-competent children represent the 'product' of much of the emotional labour of the workers. This is one type of emotional capital, that functions as what Jónasdóttir calls 'accumulated alienated love' (1988: 167), making parallels between the alienation of labour in class accounts of production, and feminist articulations of reproductive labour. Indeed, there is often a sense of alienation in this labour, in that it can be the cause of burnout and emotional exhaustion. However there is another form of emotional capital that accumulates within the self, and it is this that keeps workers motivated and engaged, despite the stresses of the work.

Making emotional capital visible

In many ways, emotional capital has been demonstrated in various ways in the previous chapters, such as the need to manage feelings of shame in Chapter 5, showing insight into others in Chapter 6, or the value of altruism seen in Chapter 7. Here I talk more explicitly about the value that workers see in emotional skills and understanding, and the ways they invest in this as a resource. Julie, for example, gives her perspective on the importance of having emotional skills in childcare;

> *it's hard dealing with other people's emotions, and you've certainly gotta... know that... we're in an industry where we work with people... all the time, and we have to take into account, if someone's having a bad day, they might need an extra, you know, few moments away from the children, or if the children are having a bad day, that we need to... change what we're doing to accommodate them, and a parent might not... be in the best frame of mind when they're dropping off, and they might just need to go for a phone call, later on in the day, to make sure that everything's okay* (Julie, 30s)

Being able to handle the emotions of children, colleagues and parents thoughtfully and sensitively is a vital skill in the field (Colley, 2006; is emphatic on this point). It is a skill that requires constant flexibility, because as the data from interviews suggests, emotions and emotional atmospheres can shift rapidly, and so require an ongoing balancing act in order to achieve the pedagogical and institutional aims of the day.

Given the focus of this work on caring for children, this is often uppermost in workers' minds when thinking about the skills of emotional capital. In Mia's opinion;

> *I think when you talk about emotional sides with children, I think that everyone that works with children should be able to do that, because that's part of... like for me that's, that's part of your job, do you know what I mean? It's just another side of the children's development that we should all be... doing, and aware of, and, you know, have empathy for, definitely.* (Mia, 40s)

For Mia, 'everyone that works with children' should be able to manage children's emotions, underlining Julie's point about the importance of this aspect of the work. This is a challenge to those who see childcare as 'just babysitting' - which implies a bare minimum of preventing

accidents and keeping children fed and occupied - because it articulates a much more complex view of working with children.

Reflexivity

One of the key points in this chapter is that reflexivity is a fundamental aspect of emotional capital (Sayer, 2005, 2011b). As I outlined in the literature review, there is significant feminist scholarship on the subject of emotional labour. I want to suggest that what distinguishes between emotional labour - the particular performances of emotion engaged in by workers – and what I define as emotional capital, is the reflexivity that is brought to bear on that labour. When workers engage in emotional labour, and reflect critically on what they are doing, then it becomes accumulated as capital, as embodied skills and dispositions (England, 2005; Husso & Hirvonen, 2012).

Ondine's experiences illustrates this distinction quite clearly;

> it was the first time when I ever came head-to-head in this... very heated... discussion and I just had to... stand my ground*, and I found it so hard because I really hate conflict, and normally I try to really minimise these things, but it just came to a point where she just forced it, and we just... had to have this really strong... you know, and I try to not.... be in an argument, but she was so stressed, she was struggling with her three children, that she just needed to explode, and... I mean, for me, I guess... it was a thing in that I learnt that* I could be calm and diplomatic and handle it*, and afterwards I felt like I was shaking, and it was just like 'urghhh', but I knew in that point that she needed that, and that it wasn't just about the sleep, or about me or anything, it was... there was so many other things going on and she just... and that I needed to be firm and that I couldn't say, 'Well, okay then, I'll do what isn't best for your child, because of this',* you know, I just had to really reinforce to her... 'Yes, I do care about you and I do care about the interests of your child, that's why I have to say, "this is the bottom line"', you know, like and... and yeah, it was hard and I always remember that. (Ondine, 30s, emphasis added)

When Ondine talks about being 'calm and diplomatic' this represents some of the emotional labour she performed in that situation. As illustrated by her retelling of this story as a significant event ('I always remember that'), this has become a touchstone for her work and a learning moment. She was able to learn from that experience about her ability to handle conflict, as well as how to set boundaries in the staff-parent relationship. Both of these represent the emotional capital she has developed through exercising reflexivity both at the time, as well as after the event.

Rebecca was very explicit about the reflexivity that she engages in throughout her practice;

> *I think... um, you sometimes find with parents, like they'll talk about things and it's... the reason they're doing things a certain way links back to their own experiences as a child... so you can kind-of see how, you know, how their thinking is influenced and... I guess with management, and things like that... if the boss goes, 'Okay, this is what we're doing', I'm the first one to go, 'Okay, but why are we doing it like that?' You know, you need to explain why you've changed that... process, and why this is done that way...* (Rebecca, 30s)

Rebecca is very definite that she knows how to do her job well, and so when others have a different view they must be able to justify why this should impact on her practice. She contrasts many parents' less reflexive approach to child-rearing, with the more self-aware approach that she sees herself taking. As she explains, a little later in the interview;

> *it's not like... you can separate things, and go, 'Okay, here's this issue, we'll fix it, it's done'. You do... be considerate to people's feelings and... um, that can be quite tricky, you have to tread carefully.... and again, be aware of your own feelings, and what that's based on... learn not to take things personally* (Rebecca, 30s)

She is explicit about the process of emotional learning she has needed to go through, and the ways she chooses to modify her emotions over time, through conscious reflection, so as to do her job better.

Not all workers are willing to engage in this emotional reflexivity, as we saw with the disengaged staff in Chapter 5.

> *I'm just really looking forward to all of that... that knowledge just sort-of... seeping in... um... yeah, I definitely think the new framework's just... it just makes things more authentic, it stops things being on that surface level, which I think... and I don't know, I'm not saying that's across the board in early childhood but it definitely is very much at our service... like the... there's this culture of this surface level of relationships...* (Rachel, 40s)

Rachel, who works in a disadvantaged area, with many families under stress, can see the advantages of going beyond a surface level of understanding relationships, which is what reflexivity achieves, but is conscious that many of the staff she works with are not at that point. Workers who struggle to be reflexive may not be building emotional *capital*. Instead I suggest they exhibit what could be called emotional *habitus*, the emotional responses that are more generally accessible within society. In exploring the amount of work, or not, in emotional labour, Bolton and Boyd make a similar observation, suggesting that 'primary socialization is effective enough that social actors enact many social encounters routinely' (2003, p. 296). It is by going beyond the routine enactment of emotions that committed workers generate the elements of emotional capital, such as insight and resilience.

Alienated emotional capital

As noted above, the investment of committed workers in their own emotional capital often seems to benefit others much more than themselves. So children benefit from having thoughtful, sensitive staff, able to guide their behaviour mindfully, and help them manage their often-messy emotions. Parents also benefit from the listening and understanding skills that workers mobilise to understand what they are going through, and their fears and hopes for their child. Children's services benefit from the emotional labour that workers engage in, and as I have argued in previous chapters, without fair compensation for this sophisticated labour. In this section I will show some of this alienated emotional capital, and the ways that workers understand and engage in this process.

Managing complex relationships

One of the ways that workers experience the alienation of their work is in not acknowledging for themselves the complexities of what they do on a daily basis. This was clear when I brought up the subject of emotional capital in the focus group, to get a sense from the research participants about whether this might be a valuable concept for them;

> *Yarrow: So I think we need to start being better about selling... that aspect of our job, as one of our major skill-sets.*
>
> *Ondine: And that's quite unique, really, to early childhood. There's not many other jobs where you would be so emotionally involved... 'cos you have that really close, you know, intimate relationships, with them...*
>
> *Yarrow: Yeah, it is. Like, I guess I see this sliding scale, you know, someone teaching VCE, there's a whole lot of '*knowledge' *knowledge they know, but they don't have to know as much about this stuff, because by the time kids get to VCE they're supposed to be able to do their own emotional management, but we're at the other end, we don't have to teach specific knowledge, although we do teach a whole bunch of stuff, about helping kids learn to be citizens, but we're teaching kids how to manage a messy self....*
>
> *Marie: We teach about that... every day, though, don't we? Really intentionally.*
>
> *Ondine: Yep.*
>
> *Dianne: And also, though, you're dealing with, you know, little children who... who don't have much language, and that, so you're... analysing everything, you're trying to work out all their cues, and clues throughout the day, and what does this mean, and... everyday I hear staff saying, 'Oh well yesterday we tried... you know, blah-blah-blah, and then they had a sleep, and then they were much better in the afternoon' and it's this constant... with every child, trial and error, oh, that worked yesterday, I think I'm... now I think... you know, we've got a good relationship, now he's listening to me, now he's eating lunch, he's doing this... you're just constantly working and figuring children out, like from babies all the way up, you know? So that in itself is a big job... yeah, working out what everyone needs, and how the day's gonna... how you're going to manage all these children in a day, as you say... with all the, everything that's going on with them individually...*

When presented with the idea, workers understand immediately that this process (which is usually taken-for-granted within childcare) is valuable, and they acknowledge that they and their colleagues are continually engaged in building emotional capital.

A comment from Abbie adds context to what Dianne is saying above, about working with children, particularly the youngest ones;

> *the student didn't really think that babies could understand, or answer anything. And I said, 'Well, if I ask her to go and pick up her shoe, what is she doing? She's picking up her shoe. Just because she can't talk, doesn't mean she can't understand. So... I think more of them as little people, and as who they are...* (Abbie, 20s)

It takes emotional insight to be able to interpret the needs and desires of the youngest children and, as Abbie explains, sometimes those coming into childcare, such as this student, do not yet have these skills. There is also a sense within this of the implicit value in

even the youngest children, and a respect for them that is not often evident within wider society (Dayan, 2010).

The complexity of the job comes through most clearly in situations where workers are simultaneously handling not just a child's emotional reaction, but that of a parent as well;

> *in dealing with extreme tantrums... when they are that worked up, they're in a certain frame of mind that they cannot access their verbal and negotiation type of mind, so to try to talk, and to reason with them, is pointless* [short laugh]. *And if you understand that you're not just feeding into their tantrum, that they have to calm down before you can try to make the next step, then I think it's easier to deal with, without getting stressed out. Um, so I told Mom... it was about a lunchbox, Mom said, 'I'll go get the lunchbox!' and I said, 'Oh, I wouldn't do that. You need to focus on the next step. Don't... don't give her the power in the situation...* (Lauren, 30s)

What Lauren is doing here is multi-faceted. Not only is she helping the child with her feelings, but she is also managing her own ('without getting stressed out'). Additionally she is framing this emotional outburst in a new way for the mother, in order to help her deal with these sorts of situations differently in the future. None of these are easy. Those who have just come into the field, or students on practicum, often have huge difficulties in handling just the child's emotions in this situation, let alone their own or that of the parent. However Lauren has been investing in her emotional capital throughout her time in the field, and now can handle such complex situations with expertise.

Some of the complexities inherent in the job came through when interviewees were asked about how useful child development knowledge is in what they do. While there was an acknowledgement that it had some uses, what mostly came through was the ways that it over-simplifies what is actually a set of very messy and complex inter-relationships between people themselves, and between the various sorts of skills each person has. As Mia understands this process;

> *I don't like saying 'normal', because it's not like everyon... you know, people aren't normal, or children aren't normal, but as long as we have a baseline of what they should be at, or whether or not they should be at... or... you sort-of know... you can look at a child and go, 'Okay, they're not quite there' but you can see that they're getting there, and that's okay, but then you can look at a child and say they're not quite there but they're not even nearly... they're not, you know, they're three years behind... that's a big difference... Do you know what I mean? So I think it's, yeah... so I think as long as you have a baseline, um... the more you have, the more knowledge you have it, it's better... where you can know that something's not right* (Mia, 40s)

As Mia suggests, the more knowledge you have the better. Mostly this is a practical wisdom about people, acquired through the many years of practising reflexivity within their relationships with children, parents, and their colleagues.

In the process of doing so they are accumulating emotional capital, developing insights into the complexities of human relationship that are not captured by child development orthodoxies. Here are some of the other responses by participants, when asked this same question about how much they draw upon developmental knowledge;

> *To be honest? Um... no I don't!* [laughs] *I think, that you're just faced with different scenarios and different personalities... so I think your, your experience develops certain strategies, along the way,* (Andrea, 30s)

> *I think it gets quite bad when everyone's like... pushing... like if they're, they're saying like three years old you're supposed to be doing something, and in the end that child's not, and their parents are just forcing and pushing and everything... I think... for me that's the downside of it* (Serene, 30s)

> *every child's an individual. You can't put them all in a little box, and say, and put a label on them and say, 'That's them, and this is them, and this should be happening with them, and that should be happening with them'. It's totally not like that at all* (Lisa, 40s)

Vincent and Braun (2010) make a similar point about workers' opinions of developmental knowledge, and how they are actually investing in a very different sort of value, that of emotional insight, and moral worth.

Among the interviewees there seems to be a realisation that there is an important opportunity to change how the field operates, given the government's focus on early childhood policy in recent years;

> *Um... with the new framework system that we're following now, the developmental side isn't really that focused on, there's a lot more emotional and social development, that we're focusing on* (Amber, 20s)

For Amber what has changed is a greater focus on the importance of the relational side of childcare practice, looking at emotions and social connections, rather than the field's historical focus on intellectual and physical skills. She is thinking, perhaps of statements like this;

> *By acknowledging each child's cultural and social identity, and responding sensitively to their emotional states, educators build children's confidence, sense of wellbeing and willingness to engage in learning (Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p. 30).*

Although the audit processes that accompany government attention to childcare are not often welcome, such recognition of the importance of educators' role, and their sensitivity about the emotions of others, has been more well-received, as other participants also commented on.

Stress and resilience

In the previous chapters we saw some of the stresses associated with childcare work, such as dealing with children's aggression, or managing parent's emotional reactions to children's injuries. This is one of the reasons workers must invest in emotional capital, to allow them to survive such stresses. However, in learning to deal with stress, they acquire resilience, and a sense of their own growing competence at handling difficult situations.

Mirjeta describes here one of the stresses she encounters in her job;

> *so that I know if a mother comes in... because I have psychotics and I have schizophrenics, comes in, and she's in an agitated state, I know... tread carefully, take the child, take time, talk to her, calm her down, and if she's really.... is in a bad place... take her to the coordinator.* (Mirjeta, 60s)

This emotionally-fraught situation is a far cry from the usual evocations of emotional labour, such as Hochschild's (1983) archetypal work discussing flight attendant's presentation of a pleasant social veneer. What Mirjeta is expected to do here - and expects of herself - is to be able to care for the mother's erratic feelings with awareness and insight. All this, while making sure the mother's fragile emotional state does not impact on the emotional well-being of the many children *also* in her care. This is not simple or easy work. This is why I use the language of capital rather than habitus (e.g., Husso & Hirvonen, 2012), to make the point about the reflexive rather than habitual nature of these emotional practices. Drawing upon other forms of capital, such as educational capital, is usually seen as intellectually demanding work, and I suggest the same is true for developing and employing emotional capital.

This intellectual component, which she describes as 'professional judgement', comes across clearly in Samantha's comments;

> *I guess there's.... you know, things like, um... confidence.... the ability to advocate for your own... opinion, whilst always making sure that you're... considering other people. I think this role that we have... there's a lot more of the need for taking care of other people's emotion, and other people's reactions. Whereas in other industries, sometimes um... there'd be a lot more room for saying what you think, and then that's it, kinda thing. Whereas with us, you know, you.... constantly sort-of be aware that we want that relationship to continue, we don't want it to break down. Sometimes you do need that kind of professional judgement, to know when to not say things.* (Samantha, 30s)

Samantha acknowledges the need to be 'constantly aware' of others' needs and feelings, and the importance of maintaining good relationships, which is one of the reasons the job is often stressful. It goes back to that responsibility that committed workers feel to make sure things are working for everyone else, sometimes at their own expense. Knowing 'when to not say things' is certainly an important skill, but it can contribute to the sense of shadow-working (Macdonald, 1998, 2010) that we saw in the last chapter, and a disguising of the emotional capital that is being mobilised.

This sense of shadow-work comes through also in Ondine's description of the impact of emotional labour on herself;

> *well it certainly is a massive... I mean... you know, I find it a, a big toll emotionally, like, you know, even talking about that sharing of yourself, like... I feel it, you know... I mean, it's so rewarding, and I love it, but sometimes I just come home and I just feel like, 'there's nothing else left, I'm sorry! I'm sorry cat, I'm sorry dog, I'm sorry boyfriend, I have nothing to give!'* [laughs] (Ondine, 30s)

The ‘sharing of yourself’ reflects the intimacy of the embodiment of emotional capital, and the ways this is mobilised on behalf of others. One of the reasons I suggest it is difficult for workers to address the lack of value that their work receives is that it requires an other-focused orientation, which can lead to ignoring the needs of the self.

There will always be stressful days in any job, and this is particularly true in childcare, where demands can come from children, from parents or from management. Ruby describes what she has learnt about dealing with these stresses;

> *it’s what you take away from each day, like... even if you’re in a, a foul mood, it’s like you can’t... do that with children, you can’t be in a foul mood, you can’t be... you know, frustrated, you have to put that aside... reflect on that later, whatever that issue is, and just be there with the children, and I think that’s what I like when I’m, when I’m there it’s just about... the children, and what they’re doing, and how they’re going* (Ruby, 20s, Zambian/Scottish-Australian)

One of Ruby’s strategies of handling stress seems to be to focus on the present moment, and be able to do what is most important, which is work with the children. She allows time later for reflexivity, in order to learn from the stress and the accompanying emotional reaction (foul mood) that she knows she will experience as a result.

Resilience

In talking about emotions as a resource, as emotional capital, it is worth noting that we already have a number of words that express aspects of this. An important one is resilience, that ability to cope with difficult situations without becoming defeated (Day & Gu, 2007). In talking about stress in the lives of workers, I am always at some level talking about the resilience they build up within their working lives, in order to cope with difficult situations gracefully and cheerfully.

Rachel is very aware of this aspect, and reflects on how a staff member’s most useful tool is always herself;

> *I think... the more you know yourself, I think, too... the real skill of getting to know who you are, as a person... because... if you’re very aware of who you are... then you can, um... sort-of realise what part you have to play when... either relationships have... been positive or negative, you know, because then you can say, ‘this is what I do have control of... this is what I don’t have control of too.’ So... it just... that helps you to let go of, of a lot of stress* (Rachel, 40s)

Rachel makes the connection between many of the important aspects of emotional capital. She sees that reflexivity (‘being aware of who you are’), and taking responsibility (‘the part you have to play’) help generate insight into the bigger picture that ultimately helps in managing the stress of a highly-relational job.

Anne displays similar insight, talking about her journey into resilience within childcare;

> *I think when I was younger, or less secure, I think I would have worn that, as diminishing to my sense of worth, but... but I think.... that that’s increased over time, and.... recognising the value of the work that I do, but... hang on, I’m not saying this*

> *well, but... but I'm able to contain who I am and what I do as something separate. Um, even though they're connected, of course, but... but if things go wrong at work, it doesn't mean that I fall in a heap, because I'm strong within myself* (Anne, 50s)

Anne is explicit in this particular instance about this resilience being needed in response to the lack of value that is attributed to it by others, not just the everyday stresses of the work. She acknowledges the strength in committed workers that is an aspect of their emotional capital.

Rebecca emphasises how necessary this resilience is within childcare work;

> *I think the ability to work under pressure.... it is a... job... there's no... pre-determined model for how the day's going to go... you can have your routines and things, but it's all spontaneous and depends on... the children and... the events of the day, so you have to be able to, to respond to those pressures, and, and cope with all of that, I guess...* (Rebecca, 30s)

The need for spontaneity in the role, in terms of managing the unexpected, is what rules out habitus as the best explanation for the phenomenon seen here. The notion of habitus describes the range of choices available within familiar routines. It is not suggestive of the complex and intellectually demanding management of relationships that Rebecca alludes to here.

Limits of resilience

Despite their investments in emotional capital, workers are not endlessly resilient, and there are times when their emotional resources may not be sufficient to deal with the stresses of working life. It is important to acknowledge these limits, in order to understand fully that the stresses are real. No matter how committed the worker, sometimes these pressures will become too much;

> *it was over a long period of time, so there was... err... that was a really bad emotional journey for me, at one breaking point. I think it's when you're trying to seek help and you don't get the support you need and then feel... um... that's quite stressful at that point in time, and then, then you, you think that everything's fine and... I probably have a tendency of pushing things back... so much, that you... reach a point when you just... cannot take it any more.* (Serene, 30s)

Note that for Serene even this experience of emotional breakdown was a learning experience, in recognising her former tendency to repress difficult emotional issues. She remains in the job (rather than becoming part of the turnover statistics), perhaps now with greater resilience than she had previously. One of the reasons that this work is exploitative, in both a gendered and classed sense, is that the remuneration for the job doesn't take into account the risk of emotional injury that staff take on, in dealing with stressful responsibilities on a daily basis.

Teaching others, teaching the self

We have seen above some of the ways workers' emotional capital is alienated, in the sense of profiting others. One of the most interesting aspects of childcare work is that emotions, and emotional insight, have a pedagogical aspect – they are something that childcare staff teach explicitly to children. This aspect of emotional capital not only builds children's emotional capital (and is somewhat alienated labour, in the sense I am using it here) but it also simultaneously forces the workers to be analytical about emotions and emotional processes, in a way that helps them build their own emotional capital (a less alienated labour).

For example, Marie reflects on what she tells parents whose children may be struggling in their social relationships, and it is clear that she sees this as an issue that we deal with across the lifespan, from early childhood through adulthood;

> *we're always going to have people in our life.... that bother us, or make us uncomfortable, or make us worried, and how do we, how do we learn to be resilient, and to cope, and how to we learn to... maybe help those people... be less that way, be more included?* (Marie, 40s)

Marie is explicit about the complexities of life that everyone has to deal with and how important resilience and coping skills are. I am not going to talk much about this aspect of childcare work in this chapter, but I see it as a useful insight into the ways emotions, and emotional learning, are wrapped up in childcare. This distinguishes it from other forms of carework, such as nursing or eldercare, where those being cared for are presumed to be able to understand their own emotions, and where emotional capital may be generated through differing mechanisms (Waerness, 1984; has a useful discussion about the divergence and individuality of different kinds of caring relationships).

Ethically-reflexive emotional capital

The examples of emotional capital I have shown are an expected part of childcare work, even if they tend to be taken-for-granted. These investments in emotional capital certainly help workers survive the stresses of the job, but they reveal few clues as to why anyone would do this demanding and under-valued work. In this section of the chapter I want to address directly the question of why workers stay committed to the job, suggesting that there is an ethical component to emotional capital that is often overlooked within childcare work.

This ethical component involves workers having a perspective beyond the classroom, beyond the childcare centre, to the big picture of what they are achieving in their work. Their investment in emotional capital does not just allow them to deal with stress, but also cultivates deeper insight into the significance of the work that they are doing. It is this that I claim provides the deep and abiding motivation to stay in the job. To put it another way, it is what motivates the committed worker in their dedication to the job, and encourages them to

continue to build those capabilities throughout their career, transforming what could be a menial job into one with real meaning.

Within 'Western' thought, particularly since the enlightenment, emotions are not usually seen as an aspect of ethical practice. Various scholars are attempting to forge a stronger understanding of these links (Bubeck, 1995; Manion, 2007; Sayer, 2011b). Sayer makes this connection explicit;

> *Moral emotions are part of everyday ethical reasoning. They also* prompt *reflection, and this in turn feeds back to emotional responses, moderating or intensifying them or perhaps altering the particular mix of emotions evoked by a situation or memory* (2011b, p. 148; emphasis in original)

It is this moral aspect of the emotional capital of childcare workers that I focus on here, showing how they are reflexive not just about their day-to-day actions, but about the long-term purpose and broader social value of their work.

Meaning, value and commitment

Workers maintain their commitment to the childcare field because they understand the significance of child-rearing to the community, and to the continuing well-being of society. They do this by connecting their daily work, which is not always pleasurable in the moment, with the enduring meaning of what they do. Jade, expressing the pleasures of the job, says;

> *it's more emotional, than mechanical. You know? It's just... when you're with the children... you become a part of their innocence... It's nothing... which you'll get, you know, in a corporate world. It's something that deals with feelings, you know, when a child laughs at you, or when the child hugs you, when the child cuddles you... that feeling is different.... that is the day that you get the pleasure out of it, that I did a good thing today. If the child learns something... Ahhh, that was satisfying, I taught something today.* (Jade, 30s)

Jade is struggling to express something important here, that sets childcare work apart from work in the 'corporate world'. In teaching children how to feel, and building strong relationships with them that will give them resilience into the future, she finds satisfaction in the work despite the challenges she describes in the rest of her interview. Work with very young children is often dismissed because of the emotionality and relationality that Jade describes (Fothergill, 2013). I suggest there is often an unconscious ageism at work, which forgets how much and how fast babies are learning (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998).

Soek-Teng is explicit about connecting the satisfaction she feels with her imagination of the children's future lives;

> *it's the most... it's the most rewarding job, that I know. And, yep, because you, um... immersed in all the kids' lives and... you... just think being a good example, and the children view you as a good example, and they will keep that in their mind, and when they grow up, yeah, they will be a good person, and... become, like, they are someone that they want to be.* (Soek-Teng, 30s)

Soek-Teng has learnt to look beyond the everyday concerns that often weigh heavily on workers, and see the value to society that comes from building capable future citizens. Her emphasis on them as 'good' people is a reminder of the moral reflexivity present in emotional capital.

Lea has a similar interpretation of the work;

> *I think our roles are so important, because... we have the opportunity to... to influence the child in the best way possible... and it is very evident, in the way that they behave, and in the way that they talk, and the way... because children absorb everything* (Lea, 20s)

Something is going on here that is more than 'development' and more even than learning to be school-ready. It is an ethical understanding of childcare work, which sees what is meaningful in life, and seeks to nurture it. It is an expression of what some social scientists and philosophers are beginning to acknowledge, that it is necessary to move beyond critiques of society to articulating meaningfully concepts such as 'justice' and 'human flourishing' for a modern and global world (Fraser, 2007; Sayer, 2011a; E. O. Wright, 2013). This is not simply about what is functional in to produce healthy children, to keep them safe, or to skill them up for a life of productive labour. It is about the ability to reflect on the much larger commitment that underlies workers' responsibilities towards children or parents, and acknowledge that childcare work is about the wellbeing of the human community.

Workers choose to do this work, sometimes for a lifetime, because it matters, because it *does* good even when it does not feel good. This idea of what is good is far from an abstract 'ideal'. It is a deeply-felt evaluation about the worth of child-rearing, not just for the 'sacred' mother, but for society. I was interested by the response of two of the participants in the focus group when asked to reflect on whether they saw the idea of emotional capital as useful;

> *Dianne: And often we're the first ones who... have to.... bring a... you know, discuss the issue of maybe a child having a... a disability, or some sort of, um... condition, or whatever it might be, syndrome, and quite often it's identified by us, in that environment, and then you've gotta have those conversations with parents, and they're gut-wrenching...*
>
> *Ondine: ...they've gotta trust you, and...*
>
> *Dianne: yeah, and you know... know how to... even start that conversation... then where it goes from there. I've, you know, they've... I've cried lots of times over the years, thinking about how this poor family's going to deal with th...*
>
> *Ondine: ...and we, we feel it so much... I think that's what a lot of people... they go home and they don't think about their job like that, you know? You know, you go home and dream about it, and yeah, to feel those strong emotions, is like, 'wow!' I mean that's quite powerful, isn't it?*

It is significant, I believe, that their work affects them this deeply. This is not the anger of an exploited worker, but a visceral and committed care for others, one whose embodiment

makes it impossible to ignore. It is this depth of feeling, this sense that you can do some good, if you get it right, that makes childcare a job worth doing, despite the exploitation.

Altruism, and the emotions of care

Wanting to do good through your work can be a powerful motivation, but I think there is more to it than this. We saw in the last chapter that altruism is constructed as compulsory for women, as the good mother or caregiver, and it is this impulse that often leads to the invisibility of what women do, either in the home, or in the shadow-work of childcare. Yet there is nothing simple about the struggles of the social field. Even though altruism has been used to control women (e.g., T. Taylor, 2011; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), it is also a much-valued quality within society, and it is this aspect that workers focus on within their work (Lovell, 2000). Through reflecting on their relationships, and building their emotional capital, I suggest that staff develop a sophisticated ethical orientation to their work that is grounded in the daily realities of their lives.

Abbie exemplifies this ethical understanding, in the story she tells about a relationship she observed between a child and a parent;

> *one of the kinder kids was showing the kinder teacher, Beth, this drawing she'd done.... and... um... her Mum said, 'Oh, it's just rubbish, she's only got, she's only drawn herself with three fingers.' And Beth goes, 'No! It's just beautiful. And look at everything else she's done, she's done her name, that's amazing.' And then.... Beth's like, 'Well done. I really love it, Zoe'. And her Mum went, 'No, it's pretty rubbish.'*
> *And then Zoe said, 'you know everything I take home Mum says is rubbish', it's just like, 'Yeah, it's just rubbish,' because it's from childcare. I think... if people understood more, just, how much children take in, and how much kids... learn, and whatever, they would realise the importance of those first few years. Not everyone realises that.* (Abbie, 20s)

This story has been significant enough in Abbie's work that it has been remembered and reflected upon at length. Abbie tells it to illustrate the damage that can sometimes be done to children by unthinking judgements from people they care about, and how these can become internalised as a lack of value. Abbie cares about this child, and feels the pain that she experiences in being dismissed. However she also connects it to the big picture of the place of childcare within the field of power, and that is what makes this story really interesting. She makes a link between the child being devalued and how childcare as an occupation is devalued ("'it's just rubbish', because it's from childcare") because it is only about raising children. Abbie knows that the work she is engaged in is deeply meaningful, because it provides the opportunity to engage with children in respectful ways that help them to recognise their own value, and go on to productive lives within schooling and beyond.

Kelly was perhaps the worker who captured this idea most clearly, reflecting the ongoing shift within the field towards a more democratic idea of the child as citizen (Moss, 2006);

> *I mean, ultimately... we're influencing little people's lives... that's really the core of what we're doing, whether it's in, hopefully it's in a positive way, but... you know....*

> *we're... influencing these little people to become.... productive, useful members of society... and... giving them skills to cope with social, social sit... uations, and... giving them tools to qu... to solve, you know, all kinds of problems in their world.*

Later in the interview she returned to this theme;

> *Well, I think that comes back to what I was talking about earlier... we want them to be productive members of society.... we still want them to be... these little human beings who... can work out the difference between what's right and wrong, and, you know, that's all part of our job, really. And I mean, if it is child-centred practice we really should be giving them these limits and boundaries, and... ideas about social... constructs, and... justice, and all of those sorts of things, because that's also what they're going to need to live their lives...* (Kelly, 30s)

Through caring about children, and learning how best to nurture them, in all their diversity, workers build a bottom-up picture of what human flourishing might look like (Fraser, 2007; Sayer, 2011b; E. O. Wright, 2013). As Kelly realises, it is about learning limits and boundaries, and about internalising an idea of justice that consists of more than just personal injustices suffered, but that can learn to see the suffering of others. This is why I argue that this is about emotional capital, because workers teach children each day to recognise when they are hurting others, or when their own feelings and bodies have been hurt, and this is fundamentally a process about fairness, about justice.

One of the important aspects of this altruism for workers is treating others with dignity, whether this is children, the parents they encounter, or each other. Abbie's concern for the child we looked at above was partly a concern for the child's sense of dignity, in the face of the mother's contempt for her daughter's work. With Anne, this comes through in her care for the parents she encounters in her centre, which serves a low-income neighbourhood;

> *the parents... do not have high self-esteem, they don't feel a sense of... dignity in themselves, and I think that through... conversations... you can... um... instill in them, through your conversation, and your interaction with them a sense of dignity, and you see people go away, going, 'Oh, that was alright!' You know, and so you can... that's a nice... a nice feeling to be able to talk to someone and help them feel a bit better. Is that too altruistic?* (Anne, 50s)

Anne makes it apparent that the value she sees in her work is about making the world a better, a kinder place, beyond the run-of-the-mill expectations of her care for children. Indeed, this caregiving extends beyond children, to their families, and then to the conditions of the world these children will have a hand in creating. This is a transformed vision of intensive caregiving expectations, where the caregiving is about an ethical understanding of the world, rather than a co-option into unvalued work.

Rachel underscores this point, in her deliberate choice to work in an area of economic disadvantage;

> *I actually... deliberately chose to work within a different community, where it would, it would be a more affluent community, I guess... to get a different perspective, but then... bring some aspects back... to this* [low-income] *community. You know, things that I would learn in another area, and then I deliberately hoped... that one day I*

> *would come back here, and I did... and um... yeah, from what, from what I've learnt in a different community, to think, 'Wow, that's what I'd love... for these families', has really helped me as well...* (Rachel, 40s)

The neighbourhood she works in is where Rachel grew up. She cares about it, and the people who live there, and she believes that a better life is possible, even when people are struggling economically. She and Anne are both expressing a fundamental idea about the justice of the work, which recognises the value in people, and seeks to uphold that, by providing a good childcare experience that benefits both children and their parents.

Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that emotions constitute an integral part of childcare work. In exploring these through the idea of emotional capital, I have demonstrated that workers invest in these emotional skills in a variety of ways, both for the benefit of others – alienated emotional capital – and for their own purposes – as part of an ethical orientation to the world.

I have provided evidence that what distinguishes emotional labour – the everyday management of the emotions of the self and others – from emotional capital is the crucial element of reflexivity. Reflexivity helps workers understand their processes of emotional management, and harness them as a resource for future encounters. I have suggested that this skill is gendered, due to dominant discourses of gender that assign 'emotionality' to women. However this apparently 'natural' skill is actually the result of repeated practice in thinking through emotions, that women have been encouraged to engage in from childhood, and then invest in more consciously in taking up childcare work (Colley, 2006).

In demonstrating the emotional capital that workers develop, I have shown how this is used throughout their childcare work, managing the complexities of relationships they encounter. It is particularly useful in handling the many stressful situations they experience and learning from these, building up a sense of resilience that is one of the fundamental dispositions of emotional capital. Another of these dispositions is insight, and this is developed in part through workers' conscious teaching of emotional management skills to children, in the context of behaviour management. In doing so they are forced to be analytical in their understanding of emotions, in what is usually a much taken-for-granted process, and so generate expertise in the managing of children's emotions as well as their own.

Most importantly for my thesis, I contend that workers' emotional capital is evident in their ethical understanding of the work, and the connections they make between carework, human relationships, and the possibilities of human flourishing (Sayer, 2011b). I maintain that it is this ethical orientation that explains why workers remain committed to the field, showing dedication to a job that is significantly lacking in either material or cultural rewards. By believing that what they do matters deeply, both in terms of the lives of those they work with, but also for wider society, they can see a value in their work that is able to counteract the negative assumptions that usually pervade images of childcare and childcare workers. This

is an enhanced conception of responsibility that acknowledges responsibility, in as much as any individual can, for the state of the world.

Such ethical work is not restricted by classed background, or educational qualification. Duffy (2005, 2007) rightly draws attention to the classed divisions that are often made within reproductive labour between the menial and 'spiritual' aspects of the work. In talking about committed workers, rather than 'qualified' or 'unqualified' staff, I want to be clear that such a distinction is unhelpful and misleading when understanding childcare work. This is where professionalisation processes may be damaging, because they fail to acknowledge what I am claiming is the real foundation of childcare - the ethical orientation of workers - in favour of expanded credentialism (Brennan, et al., 2009). The altruism of workers – their concern for others – makes them just as likely to share equally the menial aspects of childcare work as they are to reflect critically on the educational needs of the field, or any of the other more 'spiritual' aspects of this work. The location in social space of those in the childcare field, their proximity to necessity, does not allow the luxury of such classed distinctions.

What they can do - I have shown in this chapter how this happens - is to invest in a resource that is accessible to them, emotional capital, in ways that benefit not just the field, but the wider world. Through developing qualities such as insight and resilience, they become experts at managing the often-difficult circumstances and significant responsibilities of childcare work. In doing so they come to see the deep significance of work that they do, and gain a greater awareness that childcare matters, because the future well-being of society lies in the hands of these children. This ethical awareness, for those workers who develop it, creates a sense of value, a hidden form of symbolic capital that makes the work worth doing.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis I sought an answer to how the field of childcare is shaped by patterns of value associated with social class and gender. As I undertook the initial interviews, reflected on what I had learnt, and then focused my questions for the main phase of my data collection, I became aware of just how infused childcare is with classed and gendered understandings. Beyond my initial assumption that dealings with parents might be revealing about the classed relations that were present in the centres, I found that the attitudes of those who work in the field are intimately forged through their ongoing experience of class and gender expectations. This forging occurs, I argue, through their upbringing as young women with few prospects (Colley, 2006; Yeo, 2005), it is developed in response to the attitudes among their friends and families about childcare work, and then finally shaped by the accumulating experience of the low esteem in which this work is held.

Through their experiences, as described within the interview transcripts, I saw childcare as participants see it, as a valuable and worthwhile job, full of the rewards of teaching and caring for young children, and the satisfaction of providing support for families who really need it. I also felt through their words the perceptions of society about childcare; as low-skilled work, work apparently familiar to all, in which the complexities and skill are often so invisible as to render it shadow-work (Macdonald, 2010), or even non-work (Grace, 1998).

There is some inevitability to stories about the value of work. In any occupational field - and those of childcare are no exception - there will be workplaces whose workers see value in what is being done, even if that value may be no more than an honest paycheck. Yet the potential for reflexivity by workers about the meaning of what they are doing seems particularly acute in the context of childcare, where prior historical schemes of value operate to render such work mundane, and supposedly undemanding (Sayer, 2005; Skeggs, 2004a). In fact it became clear that despite its low value - as both menial and women's work - within the field of power, childcare workers view their labours as not just respectable and responsible work, but profoundly ethical work. It is work that raises the next generation of society to be better people, with an awareness of justice, a willingness to learn, and the ability to get along with others, and so comes to be seen as work of the highest significance.

Original contribution to knowledge: Childcare in an ethical context

This thesis makes three original contributions to knowledge about the early childhood field. The first is the overarching finding of this thesis, the identification of the expertise of the committed worker, and how this expertise functions as a form of subcultural capital within the childcare field. The next concerns the importance of emotional reflexivity within the practices of the committed worker. This reflexivity by workers about the care that they show to others

drives development of a deep ethical orientation to the work. I have shown that this ethical awareness is crucial in understanding the commitment of workers to their jobs and to the field. The last contribution to knowledge, building on work done in this area within other countries, is my analysis of how class and gender intersect in Australian childcare work practices. Classed and gendered relations are an ever-present reality within the childcare field, and impact substantially on the well-being of workers, with flow-on effects for the workplace and the wider field.

The focus on expertise as subcultural capital represents a reframing of childcare work to highlight the agency and reflexivity of workers, in the context of the exploitative conditions of the work. Paid childcare is a form of caring and educational work enacted predominantly by a group of (dominated) classed and (female) gendered employees. The location in social space of those who work in this field is a measure of the low value attributed to this work within the field of power. My research shows that workers resent deeply the lack of value attributed to their work, which they invoke through their recollections of contemptuous descriptions of their work as 'just babysitting'. Those interviewed for this study, who represent a more-committed-than-average sample of the childcare workforce, have invested heavily in themselves as respectable and responsible workers, willing to work hard, and do what is necessary to make the childcare field function better. These are the practices of the committed worker, a largely-unacknowledged set of skills within the field. My claim is that this investment in their own expertise by workers constitutes a distinctive form of subcultural capital. This idea of subcultural capital offers a unique way to understand the value of childcare work as seen by those who actually do it, rather than those who supervise or control it. The workers participating in this research are, I argue, those identified by Bretherton (2010) as 'fighters', the lynchpin of a well-functioning childcare system.

A key aspect of the committed worker is their emotional insight. The place of emotions and emotional capital within childcare constitutes the second contribution to knowledge made by this thesis. I have shown how the interviewees' experiences are suffused with an emotional and relational understanding of childcare work. I argue that this is best understood as emotional capital, an embodied form of capital acquired through reflexive understanding of their own emotional labours. Given that the professionalisation process seems not to have delivered distributive or recognitional gains to workers, emotional capital can offer a way to engage differently in the struggles of the social field around the value of this feminised work. There is increasing recognition in the modern world that emotional understanding is a distinct skill that can be acquired and mobilised to advantage in the workforce. An important aspect of this contribution to knowledge is my reconceptualisation of emotional capital and the ways it can offer useful leverage to workers in their struggle for recognition, connecting the value of such capital in other fields (e.g., management), with its potential or actual value in childcare. One key aspect of this reconceptualisation of the idea of emotional capital is the connections

I make between emotional insight and ethical awareness. Workers' ethical awareness of the significance of childcare as fundamental to all human societies provides a convincing explanation, I argue, for why some childcare workers dedicate themselves to their jobs despite the low cultural and material recognition for these efforts.

The last significant contribution to knowledge of this thesis is the understanding that social class and gender are deeply implicated in the processes of childcare within Australia. The almost-exclusively female workforce is well known but often taken-for-granted, with more research being focused on the rarity of males within the field rather than the women who do the majority of the work[26]. More seriously, the impact of social class on childcare is sometimes acknowledged by researchers in Australia (e.g., Sims, 2007), but remains almost totally ignored by policy-makers and those within the field, either due to the rhetoric of a classless society (Brennan, 1998; Pini, et al., 2010) or possibly the emotional discomfort felt around classed inequalities (Sayer, 2005). This thesis returns social class to a central place in current understandings of the childcare workforce, showing how devaluation of childcare work is both a cause and a result of class and gender exploitation (Delphy & Leonard, 1992). Workers frequently seem to be invisible, dismissed as a means to someone else's ends, which constitutes one of the prime forms of misrecognition of this and similar work (Sayer, 2011b). By highlighting the value of workers, particularly given their marginalised location in social space, this research helps reposition their role, and their needs in performing that role, as vital to the flourishing of the childcare field.

Answering the research questions

The central research question of this thesis is;

How is childcare work shaped by patterns of value associated with social class and gender?

It has involved asking what is valued within the field, by which actors, and therefore who gains or loses from these acts of valuation. These are the ongoing struggles of the childcare field, and I have drawn on the experiences of Australian workers to provide answers to questions that are likely to have broader application within institutional childcare practices around the world. These four questions clarify and expand upon the central research question.

i. *How do workers experience the lack of value and respect for childcare work?*
ii. *How do workers build regimes of value and respect in their job beyond the conventional devaluing of the field?*
iii. *How does the nature of the work, as relational and familial, affect workers' experience of value?*
iv. *How are existing discursive constructions of childcare value, such as professionalism or mother-like care, taken up by workers?*

The answer to sub-question 1 was to be found in Chapter 5, where I explored how childcare workers feel about the pay and conditions of the field, and the perceptions of others about the worth of their work. The answer to sub-question 2 could be found primarily in Chapters 6 and 8, in which I showed workers' investment in their own sense of expertise, which draws on a practical wisdom and emotional insight not often recognised as vital to childcare work. Chapter 7 addresses sub-question 3, acknowledging that the paid work of childcare is often perceived through the lens of the unpaid work of mothers, and so is further devalued through processes of naturalisation. The last sub-question acknowledges two of the dominant models of value within the field, and how these are taken-up or contested by workers, and answers to this question were explored in Chapters 6 and 7. This following section synthesises my answers to these sub-questions, and constitutes a response to the over-arching research question.

Appraising the value of childcare work

In this section I discuss what I have learnt from my analysis of the research material, and demonstrate the significance of these findings to ongoing research involving childcare work. In the introduction I explained how childcare research has been dominated largely by research from a psychological, economic and educational perspective, neglecting the sociological aspects of the field that help provide the context for such research. In this section I elucidate this sociological context of childcare, showing the impact of class- and gender-based inequalities on the lives of workers. Having done so, I return briefly to those other areas of research, suggesting how these might be transformed by such sociological insights.

Capital in the childcare field

Bourdieu's (1986) expansion of the metaphor of capital beyond economic resources has been a productive one. It has made space for a more nuanced sociological understanding to emerge, which makes visible a much wider variety of resources that people draw on to gain access to power within society. This is especially useful in childcare, where a focus on just economic capital would reveal a very simple story about the economic disadvantage of childcare workers, many of whom earn the minimum wage for non-minimal labour. I have employed the idea of capital widely in this thesis, such as the role it plays in workers' understanding of their own skills (subcultural capital), the types of capital-accumulation strategies of the field (professional educational or social capital), the gendered constraints on capital accumulation (shadow-work, wielding authority), and the potential significance of emotional capital.

In Chapter 6 I argue that workers, in the absence of any significant recognition by others of the complexity of their job, have developed their own conception of childcare expertise. This expertise draws upon the practical experience they have gained in the field, (some)

knowledge derived from more formal study, as well as a sort of folk-wisdom about caregiving that draws upon their social and cultural histories as women - often as women from marginalised locations in social space. This variously-acquired cultural capital, I argue, functions as a resource for workers, and is best understood as a form of subcultural capital. Subcultural capital (Bullen & Kenway, 2005) expresses the idea that this resource yields some advantage, but only within certain sections of the childcare field. It has some resonance with Nowotny's (1981) notion of the secondary currencies that women have access to through their gender, which do not have access to the full exchangeability of legitimated forms of capital, but whose limited exchangeability is far preferable to non-convertible currencies.

My arguments about the subcultural capital accrued and invested in by committed workers suggest that this resource is recognised by colleagues within the service, and to a lesser extent by management as well. These co-workers and employers value the skills and dispositions embodied by these workers, and they are respected for these skills within their own workplaces, thus experiencing a limited form of symbolic capital. However this subcultural capital is not yet recognised or legitimated by bureaucrats, governments, or the academic experts within the field, meaning that it generates little economic or symbolic capital beyond the boundaries of the field. There has been some initial discussion about extending the Australian teaching standards into the early childhood sector, which would allow for a recognition of highly accomplished teachers (and accompanying pay benefits) within the field (Mowbray, Sims, McPhan, & Pegg, 2012). However there was no sense within this discussion that other than degree-qualified workers would be included within such standards, thus making them applicable only to a very small proportion of workers in childcare – currently around 7% of workers (Australian Federal Government, 2010, Table 1.4.3) - even if this early proposal does come to fruition. My arguments about committed workers recognise that this form of subcultural capital is a resource embodied by workers of all types within childcare, both unqualified and qualified staff, and so it represents a much broader definition of expertise than defined in school teaching standards.

This raises the question of professionalism in childcare, also examined in Chapter 6. I argued there that discussions about professional status in childcare often seem to misunderstand the nature of the field. While greater autonomy and professional pay rates would be welcomed by workers, and this is often the well-intentioned aim of advocates for professionalisation, I suggest that these are unlikely to happen while childcare work is seen as fundamentally unskilled labour, undertaken chiefly by women. It is these prior classificatory schemes of value, as Skeggs (2004a) calls them, that have been largely ignored in research concerning childcare, leading to a central misunderstanding about the problems facing workers. Professionalisation has been widely promoted over the last twenty years in Australia as a capital-accumulation strategy for workers (e.g., Elliott, 2006;

Stonehouse, 1992; Whitington, et al., 2009). Yet by any measure of recognition, such as wages or status, the value of childcare work within the field of power remains low.

My arguments, based upon the genuine anger and puzzlement of workers over the absence of any material recognition for their work (see Chapter 5), are that such a capital-accumulation strategy has not been effective. Promoting professionalism has certainly raised workers' expectations of their own value, and at some points may have helped spur on their investment in themselves as committed workers. However in practice this strategy has had the effect of increasing the workloads and work expectations for those in childcare, without any apparent compensation for such productivity gains. This was highlighted by the government's recent workforce strategy, located explicitly within professionalisation discourses, which promoted workers' investments in educational capital heavily, while sidelining any discussion about improvements in pay (Early Childhood Development Working Group, 2012).

Even relationships within the field, such as the important relationships with parent-users of childcare, are affected by these issues. The idea of professionalism relies on legitimated cultural and social capital, enabling professionals to wield symbolic power. Yet childcare workers often experience little symbolic power in regard to parents, revealing the lack of legitimation for their 'professional' status beyond the walls of their childcare service, as I showed in Chapter 7. Ironically, workers have been given an expectation of their own power through these professionalism discourses, and sometimes fail to recognise when their actual experiences represent a lack of power. The authority of parents in regard to their own children seems to remain absolute, while the professional authority of even long-time and highly experienced workers is devalued. This is the experience of shadow-mothering (Macdonald, 2010), in which childcare workers' labours must necessarily remain invisible. In spite of their work, and their genuine care for children, all the credit for well-raised children seems to accrue to mothers themselves, leaving workers' contributions in the shadows. Macdonald (2010) suggests that this credit-taking by mothers is premised on the logic of intensive mothering, which makes it risky to acknowledge the contributions of others to mothering work.

I will discuss the gendered logic of mothering further in the next section, but this section is not complete without acknowledging the importance of emotional capital within the childcare field. I have suggested, particularly in Chapter 8, that insight into emotional processes needs to be recognised as a significant aspect of the resources of the committed worker. This skilled emotional work, when subjected to critical analysis by workers in relation to their own practice, is able to accumulate as a distinctive set of skills for relating effectively with children, colleagues and families.

Risking or resisting exploitation

In discussing the value of childcare work, and how this was contested by workers during their daily lives, the issue of resistance was never far from my thoughts. As I analysed the experience of workers I asked if I could see resistance on their part and if so how it was expressed. Resistance is a minor theme across the thesis, manifesting in a variety of ways; the understandable decision to quit such unvalued work (Chapter 5), the uneasy accommodation to discourses which contradict committed workers' own sense of value (Chapter 6), the willingness to conform (or not) to mothering expectations (Chapter 7), and whether to engage in the exhausting emotional work of childcare, despite the costs to the self (Chapter 8). This resistance is always at some level about the exploitation that workers experience. Sometimes this exploitation is primarily economic, as discussed in Chapter 5, in the recognition of the low pay received for difficult work, and can be understood quite readily through classed analyses. At other times the exploitation was discursively mediated, seen in the high expectations on workers to perform selflessly on behalf of others, as in Chapters 7 and 8.

My argument across the thesis is that childcare represents a particular nexus of low-valued work, which epitomises both women's work, in the associations with child-rearing, and menial work, in the long hours and dirty work that it involves. Gendered and classed exploitations reinforce each other in a variety of ways, constraining workers into more limited forms of resistance than might be expected, given the extent of the exploitation. With little economic capital, many women must take childcare work because it is available, thus conscripting them into highly gendered forms of labour, reifying their association with caring and mothering. As women, many workers have been encouraged throughout their lives to identify as mothers, or as caring individuals, and so are easy to persuade into the caregiving work of childcare. Indeed a number of participants described being persuaded into this role as a 'natural' thing, despite their expressed inclination for other work. This naturalisation of women's caregiving work thus coerces workers into low-paid work, reinforcing women's habitual lack of economic capital. In the thesis I have discussed this mutually reinforcing process, and show that whatever these women's holdings of cultural and economic capital prior to entering the childcare field, they all become classed by this occupation's low worth within the field of power.

None of these women want to be exploited, yet to resist these processes described above is difficult, because their choices are limited. Many childcare workers do quit, as shown in the high turnover within the field (Bretherton, 2010), but this comes at a severe cost to their financial stability, as well as inciting judgements about their willingness to work hard. Resisting the ideological coercion towards what I have called intensive caregiving expectations is even more difficult, because the need for caregiving within society is unavoidable, and women know this well (Bubeck, 1995; Lovell, 2007; J. Nelson, 1999). Even

when women recognise the unfairness of such gendered expectations, there still remains a seductiveness about the taking up of respectability and responsibility, because of the sense of self-respect that can be felt through doing so. Sennett (2003) observes that two of the ways people find respect are through care of the self and giving back to others. One method of workers' resistance to exploitation combines both these aspects of respect, in creating a localised sense of value around their work - a type of community cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) - in which they acknowledge the value of their work to themselves, and reflect this worth back to their co-workers. This is the logic of the committed worker, a logic that involves dedication to the job, and the willingness to do it well despite the lack of external reward. A different sort of resistance is sometimes manifested, however, in the shape of 'small acts of subversion' (Osgood, 2010, p. 127), as seen in Chapter 6. These acts can give workers a mischievous sense of satisfaction within the tightness of the material and discursive constraints that they experience.

The centrality of emotions

This research has shown how emotions permeate almost every aspect of childcare work, and the emotions of workers are now starting to get some attention within the educational literature in regard to childcare (Elfer, 2013; Page & Elfer, 2013). These emotions represent a huge spectrum of feeling, including anger, joy, frustration and shame. Workers wonder how work that is this emotionally-involving and important can be valued so little, and why raising children for an uncertain and difficult future is costed at minimum-wage.

I argue that the emotional insight and skills of workers is at the centre of their expertise, and offers a vital resource to themselves, and to those around them. This is emotional capital, an embodied capital accrued through investment in feeling, thinking and doing emotions. Given the hyper-separation of skills and dispositions that is the result of a gendered system, this form of capital is currently accrued mostly by women, through their overwhelming co-option into practices of care from an early age (Bubeck, 1995; Manion, 2007). This offers advantages and disadvantages. It is a strategic advantage to women to have an (unchosen) apprenticeship in emotional skills, and a further advantage as childcare workers to be able to deepen and develop these skills through reflexive awareness of the extensive emotional work that childcare work involves. Such reflexivity is much easier to identify within the childcare field than other occupations, I suggest, because of the explicitness with which workers must address emotional issues with children, as part of their pedagogical practice. It is this daily habit of identifying and managing emotions in order to guide children that accelerates the development of emotional capital for workers across all aspects of their labour. The disadvantage of the gendering of emotional skills is the still low exchange-value of emotional capital, which is rarely visible as a marketable and rewarded skill within the workplace. However this may be starting to change with the increased interest in recent decades in ideas such as emotional intelligence, and the increasing importance of emotional

skills within management (Goleman, 1999; Hodson, 2002; Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; D. Nelson & Low, 2011).

Rather than contesting the gender-segregation of childcare work - which has been examined and contested significantly in the last twenty years (see Chapter 2), with very little actual change in the numbers or quality of men entering the field – I suggest that a better strategy is to focus on the qualities and expertise of workers, and the justifiable recognition of such skills. The discursive recognition of childcare as valuable work is an important aim in itself – as the professionalisation of childcare set out to achieve – and this may eventually result in a differently-gendered composition of the workforce. Such discursive recognition will drive claims for distributive justice, and a re-evaluation of all childcare pay rates, regardless of the level of qualification. This is beginning to happen through work-value claims, and Union activism (Cortis & Meagher, 2012; LHMU - Childcare division, 2011; United Voice, 2011). At present it is not workers themselves that benefit from their emotional capital, but the children and families who are the recipients of their emotional work. Achieving meaningful distributive and recognitional justice for workers would address this imbalance, acknowledging Bubeck's (1995) argument about the injustice at the heart of the willingness to care.

The cultural logic of childcare

The last of my responses to the research question concerns what I called 'the cultural logic of child-rearing' (Chapter 7). As I have argued, childcare has its own very particular culture and history, shaped by its associations with women's work (and thus the ambivalent status of mothering) and with menial work (in terms of the essential domesticity of much of the labour that goes on in the field). In searching for respectability at the broadest level, the field has attempted to defy the low value of work through the capital-accumulation strategies of professionalism or the scientific legitimation of developmental discourses.

Workers have attempted to chart a course through these various attributions of value, resulting in the production, I argue, of the committed worker. This worker, as Osgood (2012) also observes, is the dual product of the collective location in social space of those who make up the childcare workforce, and the various discourses that dominate the field, educationally and politically. In Chapter 6 I showed the ways that workers draw on their own experiences, both in and out of the field, to make judgements about how to do their job. At times they draw on ideas they associate with professionalism, such as developmental knowledge, while at other times they show the no-nonsense child-rearing attitude that Lareau (2003) calls 'the accomplishment of natural growth'.

As Gillies (2007) observes, the values that shape our caregiving practices towards children are the subject of societal struggles. She makes the connections between the dominant-classed values of 'concerted cultivation' that Lareau (2003) articulated and the educational agenda of the government in the UK. Workers in Australia similarly must negotiate the

concerted cultivation that seems to underpin childcare professionalism, and their own values around child-rearing which are often quite different.

The result is that childcare practice has developed its own cultural logic – sometimes a covert logic - that does not map onto the cultural logic of either the dominant or the dominated classes. I suggest that it represents the collective wisdom, not necessarily acknowledged openly, of childcare workers, about children's needs and the needs of society. This is a practical wisdom, with every child-rearing decision tested daily and intensively in the living laboratory of institutional childcare. The effectiveness of these child-rearing practices, and their usefulness with children from a huge variety of cultural backgrounds, is thoughtfully assessed by workers, leading to the collective expertise seen today.

This brings me back to the idea of reflexivity, which I suggest underpins the acquiring of emotional capital amongst workers. Such collective wisdom does not represent simply a feel for the game of childcare, as Colley and her colleagues' (2003) notion of vocational habitus would suggest. This idea would suggest an unthinking acquisition of a new set of child-rearing values. Instead, and this is where Sayer's (2005) elucidation of everyday reflexivity comes to the fore, childcare workers have had to evaluate at a practical level the usefulness of both their 'inherited' knowledge, derived from cultural, class and gendered locations, as well as the imposed knowledges of the childcare field. The result of this evaluation represents, I maintain, a distinctive approach to child-rearing, and an expression of the expertise of the childcare workforce.

Limitations of the research

In this section I will address some of the limitations that have become apparent in this research. No research is ever perfect, or perfectly conducted, and perhaps the apprenticeship of doctoral research especially so. I will outline below some of those I have recognised, both methodological, but also practical.

Methodological limitations

Although discussed more extensively within the methodology chapter, I will draw attention to three particular issues here. As a researcher I come to this process with more educational capital than the research participants, and so must acknowledge the classed blindness that may prevent me correctly identifying issues that they tried to express. Similarly, being assigned as male at birth means that my historical experiences - as an embodied gendered being in a still-binary gender world – will necessarily have been different from the women I interviewed. There may, for example, have been doubt on their part about my own access to emotional capital or experience of caregiving guilt - though I have certainly come to share many of these classed and gendered understandings as part of my time within the childcare field. Some interviewees seemed initially wary about my motivation and I often needed to flag

for them in a variety of ways that I understood the nature of childcare work, including its stresses and its pleasures.

This research examines only six childcare centres in one Australian city, and the experiences of twenty-three workers. It does not therefore express the whole truth about formal childcare practices worldwide, or even across Australia. Its findings must be weighed up always against the lived experiences of workers in other places, and the sense of worth that they feel in their working lives. I discussed the self-selection issues in Chapter 4, and how only the most functional centres and most confident staff members were likely to agree to participate within the research. This was apparent with one young potential respondent, who made a number of possible interview dates that she was not ultimately able to follow through on. The trustworthiness of this research must therefore be judged on the basis of this favourable selection process, and raises questions about what the research might have shown had all the respondents been workers who had left the field through emotional exhaustion or frustration, for example. However there is a positive side to this selection bias. Without it, the phenomenon of the committed worker might have been harder to locate, lost within all the 'white noise' of the stresses and disadvantages experienced by the average worker (J. Law, 2004). By talking to those who had acquired the resilience to survive this process, I was able to discover the depth of commitment and ethical understanding of those who did participate in this research.

The final methodological limitation is how I give voice to this research. Although my aim has been to highlight the voices of participants, and feed the results back to them, in the end the analysis, and any potential misunderstandings, are my own. Within the gendered and classed world in which the value of childcare work is contested, my own position as a 'male' academic will in some ways interfere with my ability to 'speak nearby' (Minh-ha, 2011) my childcare colleagues.

Practical limitations

As noted above, one of my aims with this research has been to contest the financial and cultural inequalities that workers experience. However, imagining better worlds and bringing them into being always involves some unintended consequences (E. O. Wright, 2013). Ensuring equal participation for childcare workers within the field of power is a good ideal, but any shift in the value of an occupation has significant real-world consequences. Childcare is currently a worthwhile and valued job for many dominated-class women. Yet if its status and economic value change it may become inaccessible to those same women. This can already be seen in a small way in this thesis, in the mention by one participant of the committed (though unqualified) worker who left the field rather than engage in the unasked-for professional learning imposed by the government.

This concern has been raised in a variety of contexts, in terms of class and race, and within related forms of carework (Duffy, 2005, 2007; Dyer, et al., 2008; Glenn, 2010). As Duffy

poses this dilemma; 'Framing the value of certain occupations in terms of the emotional and relational skills required—and even professionalizing those skills—may risk further devaluing those "menial" jobs that are not perceived to require those skills' (2005, p. 80). My mobilising of the concept of emotional capital in this thesis is not meant to imply any insider/outsider divisions about who may acquire it, in terms of either class or gender, but the risk remains nonetheless. If emotional skills become another avenue for credentialism then this attempt to engage in the struggles of the social field will have resulted only in privileging yet again those with most access to educational and cultural capital, rather than those who have already struggled for these skills without any recognition.

Risks of resistance

With this research I suggest that workers need to embrace what power they have to shape the field. The advantage of childcare being in the public eye in Australia, as discussed in the introduction, is that there is an increased acknowledgement that good childcare services are necessary to society. Given the difficulties in retaining staff, this gives committed workers some bargaining power, even if this is very unevenly realised at this point (Pocock, et al., 2008). However resistance that becomes more open risks a negative response by those in power, who currently gain from the relative docility and cheapness of childcare labour (Foucault, 1977). This sentiment was at the root of the negative media comment about childcare workers noted in the introduction, as Sloan's (2013a) concern in the original blog-post was about rising costs to employers and to parent-users. The current under-the-radar nature of childcare work risks being seriously eroded if employers and governments decide that greater surveillance of childcare workers is the answer to this insubordination, such as through the use of 'nanny-cam' or more intensive audit processes (M. Nelson, 2009).

Implications of the research

This study shows that the valuation of childcare labour has critical implications for the field, in terms of the psychological impact on children, its economic impacts, and its educational effectiveness. What is needed are new questions about childcare, questions that don't render invisible the expertise of the childcare workforce.

Psychological research, for example, which draws on a long history of child development grounded in normative understandings of gendered family relationships (Burman, 1994), has tended to ask whether childcare is good or bad for children. This question appears to assume two things, that childcare is somehow a less adequate form of childrearing than mothering (a questionable assumption), and that most families might somehow have a choice about whether to use childcare. In fact most families in Australia must rely on some form of childcare, whether this is formal paid provision, or the unpaid care of friends and relatives (Brennan, et al., 2009). The question that needs to be asked about childcare from

this perspective ought to be, 'What changes may be necessary in childcare work to make this a place of human flourishing for all children?' (and for all workers).

Economically speaking, the question of childcare always seems to be framed as, 'how can childcare be kept affordable?' This is a short-sighted question, which presumes affordability is either about cheap childcare or high government expenditure. A better question might be, 'what investment is needed now to produce the desired returns to society as effectively and quickly as possible?' Then the question of affordability can become, 'How can these gains be entrenched in the education system in ways that make it sustainable in the long term?' Researchers have observed that investing in early education has better economic returns than most other forms of government investment (e.g., Prentice, 2009). Yet many governments (including successive Australian governments) have become captured by the narrow sectoral interests of private childcare providers (Sumsion, 2006), who maximise their profits by minimising their largest cost, the wages and conditions of workers. This is a manifestly false economy. The government currently subsidises all registered childcare services indirectly through the childcare benefit scheme (Sumsion, 2006), which makes it an attractive business for private providers. This scheme could easily be linked to a statutory requirement detailing improved wages and conditions for childcare workers, including meaningful ongoing learning opportunities. This is in the long-term interests of the government and of Australian society, in strengthening the education system. Yet it seems that the low-value of childcare work – tied into classed and gendered historical schemes of value – is treated as inevitable, rather than as a roadblock to a truly productive childcare field.

Educationally, the focus seems to have been too narrow. The educational model of schooling, with single degree-qualified teachers teaching large numbers of children alone in a classroom, is a world away from the cooperative teaching, smaller class sizes and long days of childcare. Yet this educational model, which has focused on the professionalisation of teaching work, fails to address the lived experiences of childcare. As observed in Watson's (2006) report in Chapter 1, most investments in this model of education are pathways out of childcare, rather than pathways into it. Interestingly, it may also be failing the school system too, as recent research on professional education underscores the importance of not just the mind (professional knowledge base), but the hand (practical wisdom and lived experience), as well as the heart (the feelings and values underpinning such work) (Shulman, 2013). It is these last two elements that have become visible in this thesis.

Drawing on an educational metaphor, it appears attention is paid only to the 'formal curriculum' of childcare (the government's or researcher's vision), while ignoring both the hidden and lived curricula of childcare practice. The lived curriculum of childcare, to expand on this metaphor, involves a wide variety of workers, with much more diverse backgrounds than the teaching profession. They have different skills and histories, and their educational

aims are much more about teaching children *how* to learn, than the detail of that learning. This calls for new questions which address the needs of the entire childcare workforce. These questions might ask, 'How can childcare work be valued differently, educationally and economically, so that all workers are motivated to engage in ongoing learning?' This then invites questions about the best or most effective forms of ongoing learning, which might involve formal qualifications, but also might target collective centre-wide processes, such as mentoring and critical friend programs (e.g., Clegg & Rowland, 2010).

All three of these areas seem to suffer from the same underlying problem. It is clear from the questions usually asked in these disciplinary fields that the work of childcare is not valued, but is already judged as somehow deficient. My own research reveals the deep commitment and dedication of workers to the wellbeing and education of children, and to a critical understanding of their daily lives. New research across all these fields needs to be predicated not on a deficit model but on a model that sees the real value of childcare work. This revaluation of childcare work would see formal childcare not as the poor cousin of either schooling or mothering, but as a distinct and important cultural form of care, with an *already* engaged and expert workforce. Looking to other cultural traditions, such as othermothering, helps provide a context for this revaluation. Othermothering recognises that childrearing is a communal responsibility. Wider recognition of this, both materially and culturally, is long overdue.

Future research

This research focused upon the lived experiences of childcare workers, and their understanding of the meaning and value of their work. There are a number of ways this could be built on in future research;

- Understanding parent-user perceptions of the value of childcare work
- Investigating further the links between reflexive awareness and emotional capital
- Understanding the classed cultures of particular services.

The first of these was part of the original conceptualisation of this research project, and would offer an important perspective on the value of childcare work as seen through the eyes of parents. This research offers a view on the value of childcare work from workers themselves, and there may well be crucial aspects of the childcare field that are not apparent from their perspective. Parents are often grateful for the assistance of childcare workers, as seen in some of the data reported in this thesis, but it is not clear whether this gratitude translates into actual respect for the work.

The second of these directly addresses one of the original contributions of this research, and would deepen understanding of the phenomenon of emotional capital. Only one of the questions in the interview addressed this subject, even though emotions were a frequent subtext in responses to other questions. Therefore a follow-up study examining this issue in depth would elucidate a more nuanced understanding of worker's views about their own

reflexive processes in regard to emotions, and what they perceive their key learning moments have been in this area.

Lastly, there is an intriguing study conducted by Nelson and Schutz (2007), which is the only research I have found that draws on Lareau's (2003) idea of the cultural logic of child-rearing in the context of paid childcare work. Their study, conducted across sites in two different towns in the US, reveals distinctive classed cultures between the two services that were not apparent in my own research. It is possible that the occupational mobility of workers across the Melbourne childcare landscape obscures such identifiable centre-level effects in favour of a more homogenous classed and gendered culture. A study of childcare within different rural locations in Australia would be worth pursuing, as the greater stability of the workforce in such services, given their relative isolation, might reveal similar classed effects, and offer an additional insight into the phenomenon of the committed worker.

Implications for childcare policy in Australia

It has seemed within this research that workers have become significantly more productive in response to accreditation processes, and yet this has not been linked with wage increases or other forms of reward for such effort. All aspects of childcare are interconnected. If workers lack motivation through being unvalued, then mothers are unlikely to have confidence in the care being provided, and this will tend to undermine their commitment to their own paid-work. Expecting childcare services to fix the assumed deficits of dominated-class children (as the current Productivity Commission Inquiry is investigating; see above), while ignoring that those doing the fixing suffer similar class-based misrecognition, seems particularly misguided. All children - not just those assumed to be needy - deserve an excellent educational environment, and this is best delivered by those who are supported and valued enough to do so. Although industrial awards are no longer a feature of the landscape in Australia, it is apparent that removal of these has damaged the bargaining power and conditions of low-waged women (Pocock, et al., 2008). Even if such a system cannot be reinstated, it would be feasible to introduce a 'know your rights' component for staff, as part of any new initiative, so that workers who are scattered across multiple small workplaces would have some basis for negotiation around reasonable wages. This might involve Unions being involved in this process, even when workers choose not to become Union members themselves. Recent decisions to put money into childcare wages, and establish a Pay Equity Unit within the Fairwork commission (focusing first on early childhood education), are welcome (Early Childhood Australia, 2013b), but as the change of government has shown, remain hugely vulnerable to short-term funding allocations and political whim (Early Childhood Australia, 2013d; Hermant, 2013).

Concluding remarks: The value of childcare work

Exploring the value and worth attributed to child-rearing is an illuminating process, revealing the low status of those who enact it despite the absolute necessity of such work. Every human being on this planet has needed some form of childcare, and the overwhelming majority of this care has been delivered by women. Most of these have been birth mothers, though many grandmothers, female friends and relatives, and paid carers also play a big role. There remains an odd contradiction between the sacred status of 'mother' and the perceived mundanity of the work that othermothering requires. It is not clear why the work of childcare is more meaningful when done by one particularly-related individual (the mother). Many othermothers, especially grandmothers and childcare workers, do this work with genuine care, love and attentiveness, rivalling and sometimes exceeding the efforts of mothers. The discourse of intensive mothering has been so normalised that concepts such as othermothering seem exotic, rather than an integral part of Australian life. These discourses have a damaging impact on women, whether as mothers or caregivers (Macdonald, 2010) and challenging them will help alleviate significant suffering. This seems to be happening in some places, such as the society-wide acceptance within countries like Sweden of the value of publicly-supported early childcare, which has evolved to meet changing societal standards around gender and social equality (Brennan, et al., 2009; Warin, 2014). Policy makers need to address directly the low levels of financial or cultural support given to the work of child-rearing, given its critical importance to the reproduction of society. Turning this situation around may not be simple, and rewarding it appropriately will not be cheap, as Aubrey (2011) acknowledges, but to do so may make it possible to 'achieve the ethical and democratic values to which our early childhood leaders aspire' (2011, p. 73).

Exploring Australian childcare work has revealed the class and gender exploitations that overlay each other within the field, compelling these women into low-waged work that their gender makes seem inevitable. I argue that it is the constraints of their location in social space, and the discourses that shape that location, that bind them into this work. Nonetheless this thesis has not been a story solely about exploitation. As agents, as ethical actors in their own right, workers can and do choose to stay in childcare, even when better-paid jobs in other 'women's work' sometimes look appealing. In doing so they have contested the various discourses that have dominated childcare over the years, forming instead a collective sense of the worth of their own work. The practices of committed workers constitute an unrecognised form of expertise within childcare work. This is a more democratic form of expertise than professionalism, which as Sennett (2003) suggests, relies on the mystification of particular skills and techniques. It is one that draws on their classed and gendered knowledge, and is developed through the extensive emotional and physical labour of child-rearing work. As Moss suggests, in a discussion of the changes that will be needed in the childcare field;

> *the worker... may choose not to take 'professional' as an identity and not to participate in the discourse of professionalisation. She may decide that the concept 'professional' cannot be reconceptualised and 'washed' of its former meanings, opening up instead a politics of occupational identity and values that moves beyond the dualistic 'non-professional/professional' divide.* (2006, p. 38)

I have reached a similar conclusion in this thesis. A new concept of expertise is needed in childcare practice that acknowledges the depth of skills of all those already in the field, whether formally qualified or not. Any policy-development, if it is to succeed, needs to start from the existing assets of the field, and the largest of these is the commitment of workers.

For these committed workers, childcare offers something that other work does not - the prospect of deeply worthwhile work. Drawing daily on the resilience and skills they have acquired, these committed workers stay and enrich the field of childcare, providing value to employers, to children, and to families. They do so because they understand that their work matters, even at the cost of their own exploitation. I suggest that the task of the rest of society, which continues to depend in each generation on such altruistic work, is to acknowledge the significance and value in all child-rearing work, and to reward it accordingly.

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[1] The word 'industry' has commonly been used to refer to the field of child care. This reflects a particular social positioning of child care within the labour market as being about labour rather than education, and provided by 'workers' rather than 'professionals' or 'educators'.

[2] The term field is used in a colloquial sense, as well as in the stricter Bourdieusian sense. As the focus of my study is the occupational grouping of childcare workers, which forms a distinctive field of power relations, in this case both usages of the term map the same territory.

[3] Although I use these terms separately to draw attention to the importance of emotions as evaluative judgements, I do not want to reify the false dichotomy between thinking and feeling. This issue will be explored more thoroughly in chapter 8.

[4] Given my lack of fluency in languages other than English, my research is restricted to literature published in English, or translated, and so is dominated by countries that use English as a preferred language. What literature there is from non-Anglophone countries, such as Sweden, suggests that attention to the lived practices of childcare work has been fairly limited in those places also.

[5] 'Content and practices' references the material actions engaged in by workers and by mothers, in contrast to the discursive construction of these roles, which are very different.

[6] Of course, there is also a gendering gaze, which is implicated mainly at birth when children are assigned, sometimes quite arbitrarily, to a gendered category. Though this is important, most gendered actors accept the social reality of this label for themselves, with all that it implies, in a way that is very different from the attributions of social class, which may shift and change across the lifespan.

[7] Although as I observe within the thesis, habitus is often an unhelpful word, particularly in the childcare context, because it assumes the dominance of structure over agency, and ignores how such habitual practices are always contested.

[8] The issue of respect is important for workers in this thesis as well. However although this lack of respect is *experienced* personally, I argue that it is an institutional phenomenon relating to the lack of respect accorded to the role of 'childcare worker'.

[9] This is as true for 'first wave feminism' (late 19th Century) as it is for 'second wave' feminism (1960s/70s)

[10] Evidenced in this study by services whose owner/manager is male, but none of the workers.

[11] The author acknowledges the debates around claims to feminist positionality, and whether those assigned male at birth can or should be able to claim this label, or instead use the label of 'pro-

feminism'. As a non-binary gendered person, it is hard to know what identity-claim would be acceptable (and to whom), in what is a binary-gender centred discussion (Serano, J. (2013). *Excluded: Making feminist and queer movements more inclusive*. Berkeley: Seal Press.). As Pillow has observed, this question of identify is located very much within a second-wave feminist frame, and does not take into account post-foundationalist accounts of gender (Pillow, W. (2002). When a man does feminism should he dress in drag? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 15*(5), 545-554.). Similarly Beasley's critical analysis of the state of masculinities research questions the theoretical viability of a 'profeminist' stance and the essentialism that implicitly underpins such a position (Beasley, C. (2012). Problematizing contemporary Men/Masculinities theorizing: the contribution of Raewyn Connell and conceptual-terminological tensions today. *British Journal of Sociology, 63*(4), 747-765, Beasley, C. (2013). Mind the gap? Masculinity studies and contemporary gender/sexuality thinking. *Australian Feminist Studies, 28*(75), 108-124.).

[12] Bourdieu maintains a critical distance from objectivity but still engages with it as a viable idea (See; Moore, R. (2004). Cultural capital: objective probability and the cultural arbitrary. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4), 445-456. for a discussion of Bourdieu's approach to objectivity).

[13] Information from the 2011 census was not available at the time that centres were being sourced.

[14] For example, a University-auspiced children's service served turkish bread and dips at staff meetings, whereas another parent-managed one served fried chicken and chips, with no comment made about the gap between this food and the 'healthy eating' that is taught at the service.

[15] These percentages vary slightly across all states in Australia, but remain broadly consistent.

[16] They have attempted to do so, with the implementation of recent legislation - Early Years Quality Fund Special Account Bill(2013).- however there are serious doubts over how many centres will be able successfully to access the funding made available for these pay increases. See submission from peak childcare body: Early Childhood Australia. (2013a). *Early Years Quality Fund Special Account Bill 2013: Senate Inquiry Submission*. Woden, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.

[17] It is possible that these sorts of claims are starting to be reexamined. A recent article (Vincent, C., & Braun, A. (2012). Being 'fun' at work: emotional labour, class, gender and childcare. *British Educational Research Journal, 39*(4), 751-768.) claimed instead a greater *likelihood* of childcare workers being 'working class', a claim about probability that fits more comfortably with Bourdieu's conception of social space.

[18] Underscoring the complexities of these issues, although men do get 'classed' by their association with this low-valued work, there is some evidence that they may get some advantages within the field, and secure better-paying jobs than women (Murray, S. (2000). Getting paid in smiles: the gendering of child care work. *Symbolic Interaction, 23*(2), 135-160.)

[19] Interestingly, this derogatory use of the term 'babysitting' is not limited to the Australian context, with references to it in literature about childcare work across the English-speaking world (e.g., Shpancer, N., Dunlap, B., Melick, K., Coxe, K., Kuntzman, D., Sayre, P., et al. (2008). Educators or babysitters? Daycare caregivers reflect on their profession. *Child Care in Practice, 14*(4), 401-412.; Adams, K. (2010). What's in a name? Seeking professional status through degree studies within the Scottish early years context. In C. Dalli & M. Urban (Eds.), *Professionalism in early childhood education and care: International perspectives* (pp. 65-78). London: Routledge.)

[20] Although the participants in this study were perhaps drawn from a wider selection of locations in social space than that of Skegg's research, I believe that her arguments are applicable to the wider cohort of participants, whatever their classed origins and trajectories. Respectability is particularly demanded of non-materially privileged women but is highly applicable to childcare work, given the respectability generally demanded of female teachers across the entire educational spectrum (Walkerdine, V. (1986). Post-structuralist theory and everyday social practices: The family and the school. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychology: Developing theory and practice* (pp. 57-76). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.)

[21] Centrelink is the government agency that has historically been responsible for connecting the unemployed with job opportunities. Although much of this work has now been outsourced to private agencies, the idea of 'Centrelink' provides a convenient and familiar shorthand way to describe this.

[22] I am considering their youth relative to that of the teaching workforce more generally, with the average age of childcare (LDC) staff being 33 years (Australian Federal Government. (2010). *National ECEC workforce census*.), versus 43 for primary teachers and 44 for secondary (McKenzie, P., Rowley, G., Weldon, P., & Murphy, M. (2011). *Staff in Australia's schools 2010: Main report on the survey*. Canberra: Australian Council for Education Research.).

[23] I use the term 'parents' because this is how Lareau describes it, but the descriptions of the families in her book show that this is primarily mothering work, and fathers tend to be guided by the mothers' expectations of how their children should be raised. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the words of interviewees, such as Samantha's use of the word 'parent' instead of mother in the preceding quote.

[24] The symbolic power of being a mother, however, may only be accessible to more-privileged white women. Researchers have shown that non-white mothers may invest in an ethic of self-sacrifice in order to avoid the stigma of 'bad mothering' (Taylor, T. (2011). Re-examining cultural contradictions: Mothering ideology and the intersections of class, gender, and race. *Sociology Compass, 5*(10), 898-907.)

[25] Although this may not be true for some very particular emotional skills. Illouz (Illouz, E. (1997). Towards a sociology of happiness in the era of reflexive modernity. *Theory, Culture and Society, 14*(4), 31-66.), from a different theoretical context, sees the emotional skill of 'detachment' as being an acquisition of the privileged classes. Detachment has been promoted as an important skill in the 'professionalisation' of early childhood, and yet my work shows that such detachment is not just unlikely, but potentially damaging to the ability to develop productive relationships with children.

[26] A thorough review of early childhood research would most likely reveal similar gender biases to that found by Galman & Mallozzi (Galman, S. C., & Mallozzi, C. (2012). She's not there: Women and gender as disappearing foci in U.S. research on the elementary school teacher, 1995-present. *Review of Educational Research, 82*(3), 243-295.) in their review of literature around primary school teachers, though I do not know of any such research.

Appendix I

Interview schedule: Initial pilot interviews

Thank-you for being willing to be interviewed today. As you know from having read the explanation of the research and from the consent form, I want to audio-record this interview today. This audio-record will be kept with me and will only be used to create a written record of the interview so I can then analyse it for my research. You will get the opportunity to look at the written record and let me know if you would like to clarify any of the information, or if there are things that you do not want included in the research. Any information you give me today, as you probably know, will only be used in a way that does not identify you by name or be any other characteristics that others might recognise. This hopefully means you can feel free to be as honest as you need to be about these issues. I should remind you that you can say whatever you like, or as little as you like about each question. My aim is to listen to what is important for you about your work/your childcare experience, and unlike school, there are no wrong answers! Are you happy for me to turn on the audio-recorder at this point?

Warm-up question:

Can you tell me how long you have been in the early childhood field, and the different places you have worked over this time?

The group of questions I want to ask you next are about your relationships with parents during your time working in early childhood.

1) First of all, can you tell me overall how you get along with parents at the centre, particularly the families you work with most of the time?
2) Can you describe for me some of the particular relationships you have with parents, whether good or bad?
3) What sorts of parents do you get along best with?
4) What usually helps you make a good connection with a particular parent?
5) Do you ever become friends with parents outside a work context? Has this happened at this or a previous job? How did the friendship affect your working relationship with them?
6) Do you feel like parents take you seriously when you talk to them about their child?
7) Have you ever felt dismissed, or as if your opinion is not valuable, when talking with a parent? Can you tell me a bit more about this?
8) How much do you take parents' opinions or beliefs into account, in your everyday work with children?
9) If you and a parent have disagreed about an issue, how has this been resolved (it may not have been)? Did you director/coordinator/manager have a role in resolving this? Whose side did they take, yours or the parents, or did they try to stay neutral?
10) In what ways could work in long day care be organised differently to allow for better relationships between staff and parents? Are there any particular things that are making this hard at the moment?
11) Do you think the pay or the conditions of work in child care have an impact on relationships between staff and parents? If you do, how would you like to see them changed?

The next set of questions aims to find out a little bit more about your own background and how this may influence your relationship with parents.

1) What influenced your decision to work in childcare - for example, through work experience, experience with children, encouragement from school?
2) How has your work in childcare been the same or different from your expectations?

3) Life for young children has changed quite rapidly in the last twenty or thirty years. How do the lives of the children you work with compare with your own childhood? Do you think childhood is better or worse now than when you were young?
4) Are you a parent yourself? In raising your own children do you draw more on your professional knowledge or on how your own parent or parents brought you up? (If not a parent, any experience of looking after children, such as nieces or nephews)
5) Work in childcare is often very similar to working as a teacher? Did your experience of schooling make you want to do a similar job?
6) What academic or non-academic skills do you find most useful in your work in childcare?

The next set of questions will ask you further about the relationship between your professional and your personal knowledge.

1) What things have you learned in your work or training that are most useful in relating to parents?
2) What do you draw on in your personal life that helps you relate well with parents?
3) Are there times in your work life when your own values as a person clash with what is expected of you as a staff member? Can you tell me about one of those times?
4) Can you tell me about a time when you disagreed with a parent about how they were managing their child's behaviour?
5) Who do you talk to in trying to resolve any issues you have at work? Do you talk to other colleagues? To family members? To friends?

These next questions are about some of your beliefs about childhood and what you think have influenced these.

1) Some commentators, particularly in countries like Australia or the US, have criticized the 'over-scheduled' nature of children's lives? Do you agree with this? What would the ideal childhood look like to you?
2) What was your own childhood like?
3) Did both your parents work? Did the work that they do influence your decision about the sorts of work you wanted to do as you left school?

There are many personal and cultural issues that can impact on relationships between parents and staff? These can include the home-languages we speak, our religious affiliation (if any), where we live, the level of education we've had, our approaches to discipline with children, our financial resources, whether we were from large families or one-child families, and so on.

1) Have any of these been an issue for you in your relationships with parents?
2) Have you seen any of them become an issue for other colleagues, even if they aren't significant for you?
3) What have you found helpful in your work, in learning to accept and work with differences with parents?

In finishing up, I would like to note down any biographical details we may not have covered in the course of the interview.

1) Level of schooling reached/place of schooling

2) Did you grow up in Melbourne, or elsewhere?

3) Parent occupations

Thank-you for allowing me to interview you today? Is there anything else you would like to add to the interview? Would you consider being interviewed again in the future to follow up any of the issues we discussed today?

Interview schedule – Second round, 'shorter' interviews

Questions

- What are the most useful skills to have in childcare, in your opinion?
- How do you think most people view childcare as an occupation?
- Thinking about the role of a childcare worker, what do you think is most distinctive or special about it?
- We are often told that our work with parents should be a 'partnership'. Has this been your experience?
- Do parents ask you for advice on parenting? Can you give an example? How do you normally respond?
- Many people have observed that it can be hard work dealing with the emotions of others, in caring jobs - have you found this?
- What aspect of childcare work do you think is most difficult, emotionally?
- Child development knowledge has played a big role in early childhood services. How important is knowledge about child development to you?
- Are we on the right track, with how we raise children today?
- When you work in childcare, there are a lot of people who'd like to tell you what to do, whether it's parents, the boss, children's services advisors, or whoever. Can you think of a time when you've disagreed with those requests?
- What do you think we should do be doing differently in childcare?

Thank-you for allowing me to interview you today.

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences as a childcare worker?

Appendix II: Glossary and language use

This appendix contains two sections. The first is a basic glossary of the most common terms used in this thesis. The second notes some particular uses of language within the thesis, and the political and ethical issues raised by this terminology.

Glossary

Assistants (aides) – Most early childhood classrooms will be staffed by a minimum of two workers, in which case one will be a 'qualified' worker (diploma or degree level) and one will be 'unqualified' (though often with a certificate II or III) and work as an assistant, or aide. Though in some centres those working in these roles will divide the work evenly, more often there is a division of labour, where the assistant will do more of the manual or routine work in the room, such as helping children with toileting, or cleaning paintbrushes.

Certificate – (see also *Cert III*) A variety of certificates have been awarded historically in regard to early childhood work in Australia. A Certificate II in childcare is a six-month qualification, while a Certificate III is generally done in 12 months.

Cert III – Certificate level III in childcare. This is a one-year vocational qualification in childcare, sometimes taken by those considering upgrading it to a two-year diploma in childcare. Currently it is often undertaken while workers are employed through online learning, but the value of such online certificates is widely questioned, depending on the credibility of the company conducting the training. A Certificate III is currently mandated as a minimum qualification for all those working in institutional childcare settings, though many staff are still studying towards this requirement under the transition arrangements.

Childcare – This usually, in an Australian context, refers to what is more formally known as long day care (LDC), where care is offered for children aged 0-5, from 8am to 6pm, or sometimes longer hours. Historically seen as care rather than education, and usually lower paid than kindergarten or preschool work.

Doxa; *Doxic* – Term used by Bourdieu, and others, to describe what is taken-for-granted. Connected to his use of *allodoxia*, which he uses to describe the false belief held by some within a class system that they are not as dominated as they in fact are. He sees this as a form of delusion, which is encouraged by those in power to increase the docility of the dominated.

Early childhood (field of) – In Australia early childhood has more commonly meant the years before formal schooling (0-5), and is distinguished from the early years, which tends to cover ages 0-8, including early primary schooling. The field of early childhood covers preschool, kindergarten and long day care primarily, but also family day care provision for younger children.

Early Years Development Framework; see Framework

Educators – This is a relatively recent term used by some early childhood services to emphasise the educational role of workers, despite their lack of formal status as teachers. Although most kindergarten teachers will have a degree-level qualification, most of those in childcare services do not.

Family day care (FDC) – This describes care provided for children, both early childhood and school-aged, by a single provider, in their own home. These are usually managed and

supported by a family day care coordinator, often working under the auspices of a local council. There is no fixed wage structure, only a statutory limit on how many children may be cared (4 before-school age, and an additional 3 of school age), for which an hourly rate will be earned per child. Most FDC providers earn below the minimum wage, although some (by working weekends, and at unusual hours) may earn more.

Framework, *Early Years Development Framework* (EYLF) – This usually refers to the Early Years Learning Framework, which is a Federal level curriculum framework released in 2009. This represents the first national curriculum guidelines for early childhood, and is a broad-based document prepared by a council of early childhood experts (mostly academics), that outlines a variety of different approaches, including developmental, socio-cultural, poststructural and critical pedagogical approaches to early childhood curriculum.

Intense Mothering Expectations (IME) – This discourse names the pressures put on mothers to take responsibility for their child(ren) personally, to do so intensively, and in ways that values the uniqueness of their child. This language is used by feminists to point to the coercive and inequitable nature of gender relations concerning parenting.

Kindergarten – This usually refers, in Australia, to sessional care for children in the year immediately preceding school, hence 4-5 year olds. Traditionally this involved four three-hour sessions per week, although the government has recently required this to be increased to 15 hours in total. Sometimes kindergartens also provide sessions for 3 year olds, and this usually consists of two three-hour sessions per week. Kindergartens have historically been administered through education departments, whereas childcare has been under social welfare departments. Kindergarten staff have been paid better and had better working conditions, including less contact hours and longer holidays.

Long day care (LDC); see *childcare*.

Maternalism – Maternalism is a broader term than *Intensive Mothering Expectations*, encompassing the range of discourses that have shaped ideas of mothering historically, and across cultures. The maternalist discourse currently dominant in Australian society is IME.

National Quality Framework (NQF) – This document replaces the variety of regulatory standards that operated in different States, and represents a new agreed national standard across Australia for early childhood services, encompassing particular child-staff ratios, and qualifications for staff. This framework underpins the new audit processes that replace the old accreditation system, which are currently being implemented across services nationally. These apparently have a higher standard than the old system, but a more flexible understanding of quality, to encompass the different philosophies underpinning the *Early Years Development Framework*

Nursery – This is the word used in the UK context to describe what in Australian is known as long day care. Those working in such settings are often described as nursery nurses, equivalent to the childcare workers talked about in this thesis. In Australia childcare workers were originally trained alongside nurses, and some workers will still refer to diploma qualified staff as ‘mothercraft nurses’, as they were originally known.

Out of school hours care (OSHC) – This is care for children of school age, either before or after school. Often administered alongside LDC and FDC. As a result, statistics for the number of males in childcare often include figures for FDC and OSHC alongside LDC, and

the greater percentage of males working in OSHC (though still low) tends to increase the percentage of males seen as working in 'childcare' overall.

Preschool – This term is often used interchangeably with *kindergarten*, though the use of the terms reflects the history of that field in each State. See also *kindergarten*.

Practitioner; Early Childhood Practitioner (ECP) – Although the word *worker* was used across the thesis, many workers and bureaucrats use the term practitioner, or ECP, to do a similar job of encompassing the variety of roles within early childhood services.

Qualified – In childcare, this tends to refer to those with a two-year diploma qualification, usually gained through the TAFE sector (vocational training). Qualified staff tend to earn a slightly higher rate of pay within the field, though unqualified staff at better-paying centres will often be earning more than qualified staff at more exploitative services.

Teacher – In early childhood circles this technically would refer only to those with a degree-level qualification. However the flat-structure and egalitarian inclinations of childcare means that some services will call all childcare workers 'teachers', to ensure that children respect equally all adults they are supervised by.

Unions, *unionisation* – Historically the Union coverage for childcare has been low, as the unions associated with childcare have not viewed it as a priority. Indeed most childcare workers have historically been part of the Liquor, Health, and Miscellaneous workers Union (LHMU), an indicator of the generally unvalued nature of the workforce. More recently the LHMU, and other unions that cover childcare, such as the ASU (Australian Services Union), have started to pay more attention to childcare issues, and developed some useful campaigns to improve worker pay and conditions, perhaps in response to the government's interest in this field. Union membership among childcare workers remains low, however, at about 10%.

Unqualified – This term covers those in childcare who are employed in positions that have not historically required any qualification. However in practice most would have had at least a Certificate II or III vocational qualification in childcare. The government is now mandating a minimum Certificate III standard for the whole childcare workforce, although this is not yet fully operational.

Philosophical and political issues of key language

'Respect/respectability': The dual ideas of respect and respectability are intimately intertwined, and both are used extensively in this thesis. For those like childcare workers who are not considered valuable within society, the issue of respect is ever-present, and the lack of respect from particular people is felt deeply (Sayer, 2005), as shown in Chapter 5. One of the strategies used by dominated-class women to try and achieve some respect from others has been pursuing respectability, a particular set of practices shaped by the norms of the dominant classes (Finch, 1993; Skeggs, 1997). One of the questions in this thesis is to what extent childcare work can deliver respectability to those who work within it, and thence offer one route to being respected. One of the conclusions from the study is that respect might need to be pursued in a different way, by actively contesting the classed values that underpin this work, rather than trying to adopting the norms of those within the field of power.

'Childcare worker': One of the challenges of this thesis has been to work around the taken-for-grantedness of much that is understood about childcare practices. One way these operate is through the language used to describe those who work in the field. The classic language, used regularly by many participants in the research, is that of 'childcare worker', which suggests the unskilled and class-based nature of the work over much of its history. In

more recent years, under the influence of government and academia and a desire to change the perceptions of the field, new terms (early childhood professional; early childhood practitioner) have been used, and indeed the term 'early childhood educator' is now used officially (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2013; Federal Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), signalling a shift in perceptions of the field, if not yet in actual value. These newer labels have not been taken up consistently or widely by those doing the work. One of the research participants acknowledged the impact of this language explicitly;

> *I think the government giving us a bit of recognition would be nice. Maybe stop with the label 'childcare worker'... maybe 'teacher' would be a nicer label... 'early childhood professional'*? (Amber, 20s)

In this study I have chosen to use the terminology of childcare worker to acknowledge the ongoing classed relations within the field. Moreover this idea of a worker resonates with all the different aspects of the work explored in this research, such as domestic work and menial work, in ways that terms such as 'early childhood educator' do not.

'*Professional(ism)*': This thesis challenges the taken-for-granted assumption within childcare that workers should become professionals, or are likely to be recognised as professional across Australian society within the immediate future. As such, I avoid using the language of professional, including terms such as 'early childhood professional', although such terms may be used when quoting interviewees or other early childhood research literature. However it is important to note the everyday using of the term 'professional' to mean 'competent at your job', and that workers may actually be employing this use of the term, rather than necessarily endorsing the discourses of professionalism.

'Distribution/Recognition': This thesis examines various sorts of inequality, most notably inequalities shaped by social class and gender. There are some commonly used terms within sociology that I employ when talking about inequality, namely (mal)distribution and (mis)recognition. These terms are often used to signal, in the first case, economic inequalities, and in the second, cultural (discursive) inequalities. In my study I follow Fraser's (e.g., 1989, 2001; 2007) arguments critiquing the sharp divide between these two aspects of inequality. She suggests that this divide is misleading, as most forms of inequality contain elements of maldistribution and misrecognition (Fraser, 2001), and certainly the inequalities experienced by workers in childcare involves the entanglement of these material and discursive forms of disadvantage.

Gender-acknowledging language: As others have noted (e.g., Bown, et al., 2011) it has become common practice within the field of early childhood to use 'gender-neutral' language. Use of gender-neutral language was a key feminist goal, and in recent decades has increasingly been adopted as the norm by governments, bureaucrats, and big business. However, as feminists scholars observe (e.g., Arnup, 1994; Griffith & Smith, 2005; McMahon, 1999), such language can often disguise the very inequalities it is trying to remedy. The term 'gender-negating language' (Gillies, 2013) captures this sense of the difficulties this can create for sociological research around gender.

This problem manifests in three ways in this research. Firstly, in interviews with research participants, their inculcation into discourses of professionalism means that many habitually use 'gender-neutral' language such as 'parents' or 'children' when they actually mean particularly-gendered individuals in either case. At times it has been necessary to read through this routine negation of gendered power-relations to understand and interpret the data collected. The second issue is that all the participants in my own research were female. Given that I interviewed 23 workers, this is entirely consistent (in a limited statistical sense) with the overall proportion of women to men within the field. I use gender-acknowledging language to discuss the research participants *as* women, even though this carries the risk of further normalising childcare work as women's work. I do so because their gender is significant to the lived realities they experience as workers, and the value attributed to what they do. Nonetheless my main argument across the thesis is that the

practices of childcare constitute a skill set shaped by classed as well as gendered experiences, but potentially available to all who work in the field, whatever their location in social space or assigned gender. My acknowledgement of gender is not intended to occlude the very real differences between those who work in the field, in terms of class, gender expression, political intent, or whatever.

Thirdly, and lastly, I am aware of the dangers of talking about emotional labour and emotional capital within a highly feminised field. Dualistic assumptions about gender within the Western tradition have shaped the idea that men are 'rational', while women are 'emotional' (Sayer, 2005). As with any powerful discourse, this ends up shaping reality, as gender-assigned individuals attempt to mould themselves into expected gender forms and practices. So I suggest within the thesis, as others have done (Colley, 2006; Hochschild, 1983; Husso & Hirvonen, 2012), that women come into their work with advantages in emotional understanding that they can capitalise upon. However this is a socialised and discursively constructed reality, rather than a biological or essential one, as my arguments in the thesis should make evident.

'Race' - Following Warmington's (2009) suggestion, I do not use quotes when talking about the issue of race, unlike much recent usage. The notion of race for sociologists is already understood as a socially constructed and contested category, like gender, and should not need to be visibly problematised using quotation marks.

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