

TOWARDS AN INTERSECTIONAL POLITICS
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
WORKFORCE REFORM

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In

Ethnic Studies

by

Seon-Hye Moon

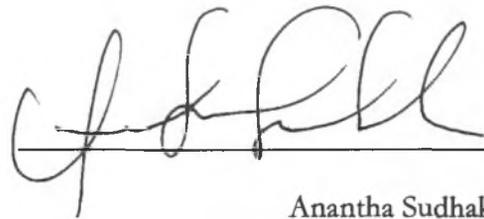
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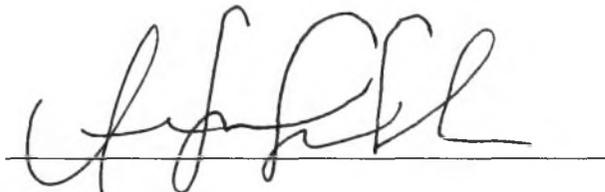
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TOWARDS AN INTERSECTIONAL POLITICS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION WORKFORCE REFORM

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San Francisco, CA
2019

This thesis intervenes on the discourse of early childhood education (ECE) workforce reform by positing that an intersectional politics is necessary for meaningful workforce transformation. To date, certain aspects of the workforce demographics have been problematized such as its feminization and economic stratification. I argue that the workforce is also racialized and performed by an overrepresentation of working-class women of color. It is necessary to examine all of these factors and contextualize this labor within the interwoven histories of gender, racial, and economic oppressions. Without a shift towards intersectional analysis, I contend that reform discourse will remain decontextualized and depoliticized, merely prompting the replication of workplace and educational inequities. By drawing upon the literature of ethnic studies feminists, early education advocates, and feminist economists, I examine and contextualize contemporary reform discourse that limits itself to wage parity to K-12 educators writ large. I conceptualize the impact of proposed reform upon the existing workforce as well as its disparate impacts upon women. By widening the critical lens through which we can understand the disenfranchisement of the ECE workforce, I contribute to a meaningful shift and politicization of reform that centers the material realities, labors, and potentials of working-class women of color.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

5/20/2019

Date

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To Umma and Appa—because of you, I feel the past, I live the present.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFDC	Aid to Families of Dependent Children
BLS	Bureau of Labor Statistics
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CCDA	Comprehensive Child Development Act
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSCCE	Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
ECE	Early Childhood Education
HSRA	Head Start Reauthorization Act
HQT	Highly Qualified Teacher
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OTT	Overseas Trained Teachers
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Math
WIP	Work Incentive Program

Introduction

A few years ago, while serving on the parent board of my daughter's cooperative preschool located near South San Francisco, I became privy to the compensation data of the school's teaching personnel. I was distraught to learn how low their wages were despite their tenure, experience, and especially given the incredible work they were doing during our children's most formative years. At this time, the board was triaging a sudden teacher departure. She had been at the school for four years but had joked that she might go work at the local In-N-Out for better wages. I understood this quantitative and anecdotal data to collectively illustrate a broader issue—a lack of social, political, and economic investment in early childhood education (ECE). My board involvement and weekly time spent as a parent-teacher within the cooperative preschool classroom coincided with my commencement of graduate studies, and these experiences formed the contours of my inquiry about the positionality of this workforce. Why was the ECE workforce experiencing these difficulties? Why is this workforce considered unskilled when it is actually highly skilled?

The project of investigating the classification of childcare workers first requires its differentiation from the work of the larger demographic of K-12 teachers in the U.S. The former group provides care for children under six years, or the average kindergarten enrollment age. This care often occurs in institutional settings which are typically categorized as childcare centers or preschools. Some of these settings are nonprofit, partially publicly funded through state vouchers, or privatized. This type of early childhood care is also provided in licensed in-home daycares which vary in size, privately through kinship

networks, or through the hired help of au pairs and nannies. The thematic elements of this work may be applicable to these settings. This project, however, will focus on workers typically employed by childcare centers.

The latest Bureau of Labor Statistics data indicates that the gender composition of this work is 95% women. The overrepresentation of childcare work by people of color is 40% (compared to the general ratio of 36% nonwhite in the U.S. population) and given the overrepresentation of women in this work, it can be inferred that the majority of these nonwhite workers are women.¹ According to 2015 findings from the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, childcare work is rung in the lowest paying tranche of unskilled occupations alongside cashiers, fast food workers, and dining room attendants. This demographic profile renders this vocational representation as neither race, gender, nor class neutral. Although the crises around the low wages of public K-12 school teachers are issues that the general public has become inured to, childcare workers' wages have been less visible to those outside of the field for reasons that will be explored further.

In the last few decades, the impact of early childhood education as a foundational indicator of students' long-term educational success has become an overdetermined finding across various disciplines.² A significant number of longitudinal and large-scale studies have shown the relation between "specific qualities of caregivers to both social and cognitive outcomes" that have confirmed the critical role and importance of a highly skilled and

¹ *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 2016 Household Data Annual Averages, Figure 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

² See *National Scientific Council on the Developing Child* (2011) for the importance of early support for development of executive functioning skills; *High/Scope Perry Preschool Project*, which was a longitudinal study that showed a positive correlation between early education with lower rates of crime, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependency.

knowledgeable workforce.³ In addition, I have personally witnessed that within the ECE classroom, where children's ages range between 0-5 years, children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social dependence upon its workforce vastly differentiates it from the dependence of older-aged students upon their teachers. For these reasons, the conditions of the workforce serve as a proxy indicator of the state of early childhood education.

In general, these findings have shifted political priorities to favor greater investments in ECE and as a result, this has mounted increased pressure upon the ECE workforce to deliver more in their role as caregivers and educators. For instance, scholars have confirmed the capacities of preschoolers to absorb quantitative-based thinking which has underwritten the push of STEM curriculum into preschool classrooms.⁴ The possibilities of integrating culturally sustaining pedagogy at every level of schooling, including early childhood, are being actively explored as the nation's children from 0-5 years are 44% nonwhite (Workman et al, 2018).⁵ While these are powerful and necessary inflections towards greater social justice and equity within pedagogical and curricular development, I have found that there are large gaps in terms of available pathways for ECE educators to heed the growing lists of recommendations that constitute high quality early education.

A recent report released by New America, a non-partisan think tank, describes the ECE worker in perfect detail: "Today's typical early childhood worker is a first-generation, minority, low-income female dependent on a monthly wage close to or below the poverty line to support her family." This profile, from 2018, remains unchanged from that which was

³ In a 2018 study, Stipek lists Bermuda Study, Chicago Study, the Child Care and Family Study, the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study, and the NICHD Study of Early Child Care.

⁴ As an example, the work of Development and Research of Early Math Education (DREME) is premised upon such findings.

recorded in a study conducted twenty-five years prior.⁶ Currently, increasing wages and the workforce qualifications remain dominant themes within reform discourse. What this discourse overlooks is the connection of such low wages to the fact that she is also female, a person of color, and often supports a family of her own. There is, here, an obvious tension between the classification of the ECE workforce as unskilled despite greater pressures on the ECE workforce to deliver an increasingly skilled pedagogy.

Due to increasing awareness of ECE's impact upon lifelong learning and development, reform of early childhood education and its workforce has become a policy priority across various states albeit in different capacities. For a New America report series, *Moving Beyond False Choices for Early Childhood Educators*, Mitchell (2018) recently produced a thoughtful list of five "Non-Negotiables" regarding the reform discourse:

1. Advancing ECE as a profession requires creating a stable 1.0 version, inclusive of compensation, before building towards more visionary versions.
2. Advancing the profession means naming inequities and using an equity lens for driving decisions about ECE's future as a profession.
3. Advancing ECE as a profession means we have to confront the field's biases.
4. Advancing ECE as a profession means we need to be more intentional about policy and financing decisions within our control.
5. Advancing ECE as a profession means we respect and leverage the profession and profession-led standards and systems.

⁶ The 1989 *National Child Care Staffing Survey* released by the NCCSS was the first time that high-turnover and unlivable wages were reported. It also established the negative impacts of these workforce conditions to children receiving care from this workforce.

This list exemplifies the nuance and complexity of potential reform. Much of the current reform literature either problematizes the lack of workforce qualifications or proposes increasing the wage floor. These five non-negotiables, however, capture the multi-pronged approach necessary to also address the systemic oppressions that have been affecting the ECE workforce. In an effort to engage meaningfully with current discourse on ECE and workforce reform, this thesis will address recommendations 2 and 3. They pertain to pathways, inequities, and biases which are topics inherently more complex to address and therefore at risk of being omitted from reform discourse.

As this list confirms, incrementally lifting the wage floor of this workforce does not affect its ceiling as it is but one of the factors of ECE reform. Put another way, marginally addressing the economic stratification of this workforce does not address their other oppressions of being racialized, feminized, and pathologized against heteronormative, patriarchal family configurations. By overlooking these multiple oppressions upon the workforce, the goal of improving ECE in our nation remains abandoned. The potential to rectify socio-economic inequities through early childhood interventions is never realized. This is to say that the status quo as well as the limiting discourse of its reform enable the replication of the cycle of injustices upon the children and women of our most underrepresented communities, who stand to benefit most from transforming ECE.

By intersectionally examining the current scholarly and political discourse about ECE reform, this project aims to prevent future socio-political investments into early childhood from capitulating solely to reactionary measures that do not holistically address systemic causes of inequities. As will be discussed in the following chapters, reactionary measures contribute to deeper racial and socio-economic stratification of both the women of the ECE

workforce and underserved children. I aim to contribute to meaningful, long-term reform by politicizing and contextualizing their oppressions on individual as well as systemic levels.

Positionality & Paradigm

My positionality is informed by my own experience of parenthood, being a woman of color, and also having witnessed my mother work in childcare while being treated as a very undervalued asset. As a mother, I encountered the difficult choice between choosing work and care because of inadequate care options. This was related to my choice of a more fulfilling job that did not pay as much as I could have earned elsewhere—in a way, I felt penalized for my job choice, and even more so because I was the only mother with a young child in my company. Requesting a longer maternity leave because of my inability to find childcare as well as reducing my professional commitment to part-time made me feel like I was seeking concessions from my employer and not redeeming rights that belonged to me. My husband did not experience this postpartum struggle professionally. And I questioned our tacit assumptions that *I* would be the one to reduce work hours. These reasons made me realize that working parenthood was a gendered issue and many women were made vulnerable by being working mothers.

Due to my children's participation in a cooperative preschool, in which parents are very active in the classrooms, I have been witness to more of the day-to-day work of childcare workers than most people. My work on the cooperative's parent board has also made me privy to the operational obstacles involved in running a program receiving state funds and by state regulatory standards. Many childcare centers are small businesses and lack the capacity to operate beyond the wages and forces set by the overall market. In other words, my daughter's school is not the only one that suffers from turnover and long difficult periods of being understaffed because they have trouble attracting workers for posted wages,

but they have neither the resources nor the time to discern why this is the case. My proximity to the details of workers' work as well as center operations afford me the opportunity to consider both the employee and employers' experiences. These exposures inform my biases towards the construction of my overall argument that center the ECE workforce in a meaningful way.

Through the Ethnic Studies paradigm of centering the voices and experiences of people of color, there exist frameworks and a language with which I am able to describe these tensions that ultimately disempower the ECE workforce. As a scholar trained in critical ethnic studies, I follow this trajectory of centering the lives and labors of this particular subset of workers. As I will discuss in what follows, the lives and labors of these workers have continued to be devalued by social and labor market movements that are beyond their control. The Ethnic Studies agenda, however, does not end with historical problematization and critical inquiry. The discipline is fueled by generations of scholars whose work is rooted in the hopes and visions of radical social transformation. The field has expanded upon the logic that power is fluid and thus can be reclaimed by those to whom it originally belonged. My work is an extension of this paradigm. It is rooted in the hope that the labors of the ECE workforce will not be seen as divorced from their humanity, and that both their work and lives will be valued for their contribution to the development of human and social capital in our communities.

Methodology

Due to disparities of early educational policy across state and even intra-state lines, there are few comprehensive sources of consistent, comparative, longitudinal data that center the early childhood workforce. As such, I will utilize an array of sources such as policy reports and consensus documents that summarize various auspices of the ECE workforce

labors and lifecycle in order to depict a more cohesive portrait. These sources will be analyzed through a juxtapositional reading practice (Vora, 2015), which places in conversation two or more unlike sources that, read together, deepen the analyses of the other through complementary methodology, medium, or genre. Alongside quantitative data and reports related to ECE, I will draw upon theoretical interventions that differ in terms of content but provide a methodological aid to render social, political, and economic logics in operation within ECE.

My intersectional approach will not address non-negotiables 2 and 3 in sequence but rather in a more integrated manner. For instance, the second addresses inequities, and the third is about biases. Each of the following chapters address both themes in various capacities due to the nuanced manner in which they emerge around the auspices of ECE. I surmise that the non-negotiables are stated in general terms for this reason.

Chapter One surveys the scholarly literature from three disciplines to help frame my argument about the labors and demographics of the ECE workforce. Ethnic studies feminists, early education advocates, and feminist economists have contributed multiple theoretical interventions which will be examined in relation to the specific labors of early childhood education. Chapter Two examines reform discourse and how its emphasis on the attainment of a bachelor's degree is biased and discriminatory, especially against working class women of color. This will be juxtaposed alongside Vora's portrayal of Indian IT workers and their highly specific job training process to examine how inherent tensions between the labor market and increasing burdens placed upon the worker further disenfranchise the worker. Also discussed will be Bartlett's (2014) contextualization of migrant teachers, and the rhetoric of qualifications that preceded the importation of guest worker teachers. This will be examined as a precedent case that may indicate the future of

ECE labor allocation. Chapter Three will examine the previous chapter's argument on teacher qualifications through a feminist lens. This chapter is premised upon women's different stakes of becoming professionalized, which cannot be overlooked due to the workforce overrepresentation by women. Chapter Three engages in a productive problematization of the workforce wage by utilizing a Marxist framework to examine workers' labor and the extreme rift between consumer classes and producer classes. This will be juxtaposed with Bartlett's work on migrant teachers and the push and pull factors underlying their transnational movement, and their transience as a population. The latter will be examined as a framework to compare and contrast ECE workers' navigation across borders. Together, these chapters heed non-negotiables 2 and 3 by naming inequities, biases, and thus providing a pathway to shift the discourse towards a new "equity-lens" modality for reform.

As demonstrated above, the interdisciplinary nature of my project brings together the frameworks of feminist studies, ethnic studies, and educational equity to produce an original analysis of the intersectional politics of ECE labor. This project begins with clear feminist articulations but contributes to a collective effort to dismantle systemic inequities and racial hierarchies. Advocates for early and primary education have, in recent decades, produced abundant critical literature and influenced policy, resulting in more refined definitions of education through a social justice orientation. Without sufficient attention to the ECE worker, and the structures of power that determine the conditions of their labor, our society's racial and socio-economic inequities are reflected and replicated—not rectified—within our educational system.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

Ethnic studies feminists and education policy advocates have examined various aspects of care work, a broader category to which early education has been historically belonged. Some ethnic studies scholars focus on the feminization of care work and others on its racialization across national boundaries. Education policy historians and advocates tend to emphasize the rights of children against the interests of the larger stakeholders such as private owners and government as well as emphasizing the importance of early education to the growth of human capital. More recently, advocates have problematized the conditions and compensation of caregivers. These disciplinary approaches will be surveyed as they offer particular insights about the modern state of care and women's unique positionality. Through juxtapositional methodology, all of these frameworks will be placed in conversation in order to produce an intersectional politics and contextualization of ECE workforce labors.

Ethnic Studies Feminists

Problematizing the gendered aspect of childcare work has been part of a greater feminist project to first make visible the historically invisible labors of women, and for some feminist scholars this required disrupting Marxist theories of labor that bifurcated productive versus unproductive labor. Roberts (1997) writes, "As industrialization drew men into the market of paid labor, women's unpaid work in the home became increasingly invisible and

devalued... Work performed in the home became associated with women and characterized as unproductive, and essential for the social, as distinct from the economic, welfare of the family” (p. 53). Marxist theory constructs domestic work such as cleaning, cooking, nursing, and childrearing as reproductive labor to the extent that it enabled the productive participation of men in the work force, so it was not entirely devalued. What resulted, however, was a hierarchy of labor which subordinated domestic work and thereby its laborers—women.

The bifurcation of labors propagated ideals of femininity which further entrenched a social hierarchy. Roberts reframes the Marxist binary of productive and reproductive labors as an “ideological dichotomy” between work and home, economic and spiritual. Domestic work, however, entails as much physical labor as it does moral, and Roberts argues that the ideological binary reproduces another “spiritual and menial” (p.55) binary *within* the woman’s role.

What emerges is a hierarchy within a hierarchy in which women of color and lesser classes perform menial domestic labors, enabling privileged white women to focus on their spiritual labors. Glenn (1992) establishes how the sexual division of economic labor was compounded by a racial division when reproductive labor became commodified. She writes, “The racial division of private reproductive work mirrored this racial dualism in the legal, political, and economic systems” (p. 8). The influx of immigrants and the population of nonwhite women who were left unemployed, as a result of world war veterans returning home and reclaiming their jobs, created a large pool of reserve labor. Racist laws prevented Black women from competing for non-domestic work, creating gendered and racialized groups of domestic workers in many regions. This segregation of labor along racial lines was described by Parreñas (2001) as a “three-tier transfer” (p. 29) through which privileged

women purchase the reproductive labor of immigrant women, and the latter in turn hire women of even lesser class and/or racial privilege.

While the feminist agenda has made profound contributions to making visible the various labors of women and the systemic racial hierarchies that reproduce their subordination, the literature has spoken broadly to the category of domestic labor and less to the specifics of childcare labor. If the feminist agenda renders visible previously invisible labors of women, feminist economists have attached and operationalized a quantitative value to these previously devalued labors.

Feminist Economists

England and Folbre (1999) argue that the “time, money, and care that parents devote to the development of children’s capabilities create an important public good whose individuals and institutions who pay, at best, a small share of the costs” (p. 195). They explicate this “public good” by delineating the positive externalities, or benefits to parties outside of those making the original transaction, of childcare. Folbre (2012) compares two couples with identical employment histories as an example of Social Security’s positive externalities. The first couple raises three children who become “productive” members of society and pay taxes into Social Security. The second childless couple, upon retirement, anticipates exactly the same benefits without having spent their lives and resources raising children—they are the beneficiaries of positive externalities. Her argument is twofold—she shows that the mother in the first couple bears most of the childcare costs for the same retirement income benefits as the childless retirees, while also illustrating the importance of this work for the future of society. The Social Security example is hypothetical, but it effectively shows the seldom discussed long-term societal ramifications associated with childcare. Folbre states that it is difficult to list all positive externalities, but she emphasizes

how “investments in children’s capabilities is quite large, and includes both returns to education and noncognitive skills...These contribute directly to the stock of human capital and also to social capital” (p. 282). Because of these material as well as invaluable positive externalities, the feminist economist agenda deems it critical to reallocate these costs from the mother to the public, as it is the latter that receives “returns” from her labors.

The discussion of attaching value to childrearing work is complicated, however, by women’s entrance *en masse* into the workforce during the late 20th century. This movement produced a demographic of women who were both mothers *and* workers. This demographic shift directly undermined the Marxist binary of gendered productive and reproductive labors, but gender discrimination continued to devalue women’s labor. Phillips and Taylor (1980) examine this shift by examining the difference between skilled and unskilled labor, as women’s labor was disproportionately relegated to the latter. They attribute this to socially patriarchal normativities that prompted men, when in competition with women for the same jobs, to protect their masculinity and differentiate themselves within the waged labor market. One way to do this was to simply assert that men’s labor was skilled and women’s work was not. Phillips and Taylor build upon this finding and cite studies that examined differences between the types of alleged skilled versus unskilled work, but they only found a preponderance of cases in which difference was minimal. This is echoed by an example provided by Hesse-Biber and Carter (2005) describing the history of the clerical profession. It began as a respectable entry level job for a gentleman, but the introduction of typewriters and the growing service economy increased labor demand for both men and women. They write, “[t]ypewriting soon became identified as a ‘feminine specialty,’ allowing women to enter the clerical workforce without being seen as pilfering jobs that ‘belonged’ to men” (p.

142). This established the conflict-ridden separate-but-equal logic consistently used to justify racial discriminations.

While it may be true that many women who choose caregiving professions do so for the personal satisfaction gained from their work, feminists argue that assuming women are always intrinsically motivated reproduces gender and wage inequalities in the workforce as well as contributing to the gendered construction of the skills involved in the work. Economists have also noted the skill premium in the wages of skilled work versus unskilled work, and they project the wage premium gap to widen with continued technological advancement. Folbre (2001) writes, “Economists emphasizing big fixed differences in gender preferences tend to argue that women are fully compensated for any economic disadvantage by a compensating differential in the form of psychic income” (p. 603). This trope of psychic income recalls Edwards’ conceptualization of spiritual work and its role in propagating a particular ideology of femininity.

What Folbre, Phillips, and Taylor firmly establish is how the devaluation of childcare work relates to patriarchal constructions of femininity. This literature, however, largely ignores the reality of class and racial stratifications. For instance, Hesse-Biber and Carter’s argument excludes the fact that industries diversified their labor pool to include both men and women, but only white men and women. In Folbre’s example, it is not acknowledged that Social Security participation and disbursements impact people of various classes differently. Thus the returns of investments to the public good are not shared by the whole public. My project locates race as a central factor to examine how and why women of color who perform childcare work bear compounded costs but least of the benefits.

Early Education Advocates

The historical survey of the last century reveals how demographic changes in the workforce prompted reconfiguration of the family and also established the need for childcare. Given that domestic labors, including childcare, were previously the exclusive domain of women, the mobilization of working mothers precipitated a greater demand for childcare. The work of early education advocates—many of whom manifest feminist orientations—have revealed the tenuous nexus of economic, political, and social interests. Their work illuminates the ways in which these interests intersect to exert downward pressures on the status and wages of childcare workers.

Klass (1983) documents that at the turn of the 20th century, the first governmental policy regarding children was implemented, but that it reinforced “the national family deal of maternal childrearing” by providing “public pensions” for widowed mothers which enabled them to care for their children at home (p. 383). Day nurseries existed but they only served impoverished families and as such were seen as providing custodial services to families considered deficient. The Social Security Act of 1935, which created the Aid to Families of Dependent Children (AFDC) extended similar support for poor mothers. This further reinforced the ideology of domesticated motherhood.⁷ The Lanham Act of 1941 was also passed and became the first of several federally subsidized educational programs showing promise for greater investment in childcare. During World War II, some childcare programs were established specifically to allow women to be employed by manufacturers in the absence of men, but in the wake of wartime, such programs lost funding and were never resurrected (Klass, p. 386). As part of the Johnson administration’s War on Poverty, the AFDC was amended to encourage poor mothers to work and often as childcare workers for

⁷ Black mothers were excluded from this program until the 1960s.

extremely low wages. This Work Incentive Program (WIP), Dinner writes, “reinforced the association between public childcare and welfare policy” (2010, p. 595).

Daycare has undergone several ideological evolutions. It being considered custodial or educational depended on the era, but it received its most promising advocacy from progressive, socialist, and radical feminists between 1966 and 1974 (Dinner, 2010). During this time, universal daycare became a central feminist agenda, receiving support across races, and classes of mothers both working and non-working. It was seen as the principle means for leveling the socio-economic equities between men and *all* women. Tensions inevitably arose along class and racial lines, however, regarding questions of implementation. Due to the tenuous political crosscurrents regarding race before, during, and after the Civil Rights era however, lobbying efforts for universal daycare ultimately capitulated to conservative and racist ideologies that privileged middle-class, stay-at-home maternal parenting. This further marginalized and pathologized communities of color, especially their most impoverished families.⁸

Feminist legal scholars and historians have collectively illuminated many of these histories and firmly established that the battle for childcare and women’s equities are one and the same. Dinner describes how welfare activists identified the nuanced connection between childcare work, mothers, and women: “Since the time of slavery, physical, economic, and political coercion had forced some African American women to place caring for their own children second to caring for other families’ children” (p. 595). This recalls

⁸ “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” was published in 1965 by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, also known as the “Moynihan Report” was a controversial report that examined black poverty and held black single mothers as responsible for impeding the improvement of the community’s socio-economic standing. As he served in the cabinet of the Johnson administration, the impact of this report in underwriting Johnson’s conservatism War of Poverty cannot be understated.

Parreñas' construction of the three-tier transfer which disadvantages women of lower classes. The problem of requiring poor mothers to work in exchange for welfare, however, was that her low-wage options often left her in worse financial condition because her earnings were deducted from her welfare check. The remaining balance could not offset childcare expenses. Folbre (2001) identifies this requirement as an implicit tax and argues, "By almost any calculation, a single mother with two children was better off on welfare than working at a job at minimum wage" (p. 122). Here, the implicit tax rate on a poor mother was 100% compared to the 30% rate paid by most taxpayers.

The policies that have materially altered the lives of poorer mothers are relevant to this project insofar as they represent the socio-economic and demographic profile of current childcare workers. Dinner observes that through the eras of feminist activism, "inattention to the specifics of who would work in the childcare centers at what wages...reflected a class bias in the demand for universal childcare" (p. 596). This class bias is ultimately what dismantled the feminist movement for universal childcare—working class mothers refused to accept the extension of free childcare to middle class mothers because, they argued, they did not need to work and were less deserving than those who had no choice but to work. Feminist activism then shifted towards equal opportunity and wage parity with men, regressing the prior feminist efforts to value nonmarket work. This in turn created greater inequalities between women.

The historical literature expounds upon the class biases that fragmented the feminist lobby for universal childcare, but the racial biases are left unexplored beyond the descriptions of war on poverty discriminations. What longer term socio-economic consequences have resulted from these racial biases? Many scholars feared that without federal prioritization of childcare in the form of universal childcare or other need-based and

colorblind subsidies for families, childcare would continue becoming commodified, as any other purchasable product or service in the capitalist ecosystem (Held, 2002). Today, the proliferation of corporate daycares that reproduce class gaps, unregulated home-based daycares, high turnover rates among daycare workers, and their ongoing stratification in the racial and gender hierarchy confirms that scholars' fears have largely materialized.⁹ In the following chapters, the histories and theoretical interventions discussed through this literature review will be expounded upon as I examine the specific site of early childhood education and its workforce.

⁹ Google's Reggio-Emilia based onsite daycare charges tuition rates between \$30-50K per child. Payment is required to be included on the waiting list for their top tier programs. Despite the high compensation rates of Google employees, such rates restrict most employees' participation and consequently only executive suite members can afford enrollment.

Chapter 2

The Bias of Reform Discourse

We do not share much in the U.S. culture of individualism except our delusions about meritocracy.

–Tressie McMillan Cottom¹⁰

In the field of early education, the predominant discourse of the last decade has been about improving ECE workforce qualifications.¹¹ This is due to the perception that teacher qualifications are a proxy for teaching quality. The emphasis on qualifications and training assumes that greater professionalization of the workforce, as a result of higher qualifications and training, will also increase wages. Through this chapter, I will argue that for the ECE workforce, qualifications and compensation are not interdependent, and thus the emphasis on greater qualifications will not alleviate their experience of gender, racial, and class-based oppressions. To do this, I will examine the genealogy of the qualifications-centered discourse. This will be followed by an analysis of the racial, economic, and gendered biases that underwrite the increased emphasis on requiring the ECE workforce to hold higher levels of formal education. Vora's work (2015) on the training process of IT professionals will be contrasted to discuss the ways in which the requirements for worker qualifications are utilized to control conceptualizations of labor shortages and demands.

¹⁰ Cottom, T. (2018). *THICK And Other Essays*. New York, NY: The New Press, 207.

¹¹ In 2015, the National Academies of Sciences released a seminal report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Eight*, that culminated decades of data on the state of early childhood education. In summary, they recommended four reforms, two of which called for increased professionalization of the workforce through better training and career pathways.

The rhetoric of ECE worker qualifications first requires some historical contextualization about the socio-political ideologies that were embedded within the concept of center-based subsidized childcare. In 1971, President Nixon vetoed the Comprehensive Child Development Act (CCDA), obliterating the possible enactment of highly accessible childcare which would have provided childcare services on an equitable sliding fee scale. As discussed in the previous chapter, historical precedents of CCDA including subsidized childcare such as the Lanham Act of 1940 and the establishment of the New Deal-era nursery schools created “tenuous political roots that planted childcare in the welfare state apparatus” (Dinner, 2010, p. 584). During the decades following President Johnson’s War on Poverty, the ideological shift towards conservatism began to exacerbate the perception of welfare, pathologizing its recipients who were mostly people of color. These very “roots” which rhetorically maintained the nation’s position as subsidizing bottomless care for needy families—as opposed to the narrative of educating the nation’s children—explains the political conservatism that ultimately culminated in President Nixon’s rejection of CCDA.

In this historical moment of 1971, Dinner writes, “the feminist vision for a right to universal childcare had challenged boundaries between the family, market, and state, and CCDA’s opponents sought to restore what they understood as the proper social order” (p. 616). This conservatism places the burden of childcare through school-going age (5 years) solely within the family’s responsibility while also idealizing a vision of femininity that is based upon non-working motherhood. This ignores the conditions of the working-class family, especially the non-white, working-class single mothers who fit neither the normative family model nor the valued ideal of motherhood. Due to the nation’s contentious orientation towards welfare, the federal government was not able to perceive universal childcare as anything beyond another subsidy for what it considered the needy family. The

era's valorization of a middle-class, heteronormative family unit explains the ideological rejection of caring for or subsidizing the social reproduction of those deemed non-normative. Against the backdrop of this period's feminist lobby for childcare as a social and gender equalizer, in practice the CCDA veto ultimately positioned government as complicit in reinforcing social, racial, and gender inequities which harshly penalized working-class women of color. The glaring lack of consistent, socio-political infrastructure and investment around ECE today, described by Stipek (2018) as policy makers' "ambivalence" (p. 1) suggests that ECE has not extricated itself from the influence of conservative ideologies.

Despite this, the political momentum garnered by the childcare lobby cemented childcare and women's rights within the national consciousness. This explains the explosive body of research from the fields of neurobiology, developmental psychology, and early education advocates examining the effects of quality early education as well as surveying what constitutes successful institutional care. In 1989, The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) released an influential report titled, "National Child Care Staffing Study: Who Cares?" detailing the extreme range of workplace conditions observed in 227 child care centers across five US metropolitan areas.¹² Major findings in this report centered around the high correlation of staff training and work conditions with the delivery of quality of child care. It is no surprise that the highest wages were earned by staff who were well trained and employed at "better quality centers" but that they were far outnumbered by centers with unacceptable work conditions and abysmally low wages. Twenty-five years later, in 2014, CSCCE released an updated study, "Worthy Work: STILL Unlivable Wages" which surveyed data from all fifty states showing little to no gains in early childhood worker wages or improvements to workplace conditions. In fact, in twenty-three

¹² Previously called Child Care Employee Project.

states (or 46%), the mean wages of childcare workers actually showed a regression to 1997 levels.

In the early 1990s, there were several federal policies that institutionalized the federal-state voucher system. This incentivized states to invest up to 5% of their state budgets to early childhood education, signaling a gain for ECE. But these systems were devoid of stipulations about how much a childcare center was to allocate for personnel.¹³ Then, in 2007, the Head Start Reauthorization Act (HSRA) required at least 50% of all Head Start teachers to have four-year degrees by 2013, which normalized the requirement for higher levels of formal education. Although the Act pertained only to lead Head Start teachers and not the entire ECE workforce—which includes assistant teachers and aides who outnumber the number of lead teachers—this goal has been achieved (CSCCE, 2018, p. 10). In addition, the seminal report published by the National Academies of Sciences (2015) recommended “improving higher education and ongoing professional learning” as well as “strengthening qualification requirements based on knowledge and requirements” as these would be key initiatives towards improving quality of ECE (p. 2). In other words, the fundamental qualification for participating in the ECE workforce shifted towards favoring higher levels of formal education.

Due to the current demographic profile of the ECE workforce, mandates such as the HSRA and the growing pressure for workers to have higher degrees only exacerbates the racial, economic, and educational inequities they currently experience. The aforementioned reports and consensus documents are premised upon the notion that higher degrees will “professionalize the workforce, leading to higher pay, improved working conditions, and

¹³ Child Care and Development Block Grant was passed in 1990, but it did not specify how that budget should be itemized. In other words, there was no recommendation or regulation about how much to allocate for teaching personnel versus other expenses.

better employment prospects” (Workman et al., 2018, p. 8). But given the levels of educational attainment that are differentiated by race in the U.S.—23% of African Americans and 19% of Hispanics received a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2016¹⁴—requiring a four-year degree disadvantages underrepresented minorities and restricts their ability to achieve greater professionalization without stipulations of equitable pathways towards higher education. Due to historical restrictions and discriminatory practices that barred communities of color from attaining education, if such a mandate is enforced across the entire ECE workforce, this will only aggravate existing problems of educational inequities. As such, enforcement will significantly reduce the existing diversity within the workforce. In addition, given ECE work’s categorization as unskilled, workers who are displaced from early childhood work as a result of lacking educational credentials may only find viable alternatives among other unskilled vocations.

The emphasis on ECE qualifications by way of higher formal education is complicated by findings that have shown how teachers’ attainment of a bachelor’s degree have not improved classroom environments or students’ school-readiness (Lin, 2017). In Lin’s recent ECE study conducted to test such findings through a closer examination of the *types* of formal education attained by the programs’ workforce, the teachers’ number of ECE credits were shown to be the strongest predictor of overall classroom quality. This finding is consistent with Stipek’s contention that bachelor’s degree programs generally focus more on developmental knowledge instead of apprenticeship which is the model emphasized in community college and associate degree programs. These are but studies in the greater body of research on teacher qualifications and their associations to quality ECE, but they

¹⁴ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

challenge the notion that a bachelor's degree is the most salient pathway towards professionalization of the workforce.

This is not to say, however, that an undergraduate degree or higher levels of education are not generative or that four-year degrees should be exclusively replaced by ECE related coursework. The aims of four-year degrees to produce well-rounded intellectuals and strengthen individual abilities to think critically make net positive contributions to the potential of social mobility for all individuals. I argue, however, that the current rhetoric of policymaking that favors four-year degrees is divorced from the histories of educational inequity and inaccessibility which have affected communities of color. Any discourse about or attempt to affect the educational pipeline and recourse for historically disenfranchised communities must be appropriately situated within the nation's political history.

In *Life Support* (Vora, 2015), ethnographic narratives of Indian IT professionals and their training process proffer a comparative lens with which to conceptualize the meaning and function of qualifications. She describes:

The process of actively forming workers as appropriate for the specific demands of outsourcing interests become visible in the tapping and recruitment of college-educated Indian youth for both BPO programming and call center work. In the case of computer programming BPOs, most companies recruit directly from college engineering programs, putting their new hires through a lengthy training period where they develop the applicable skills that supplement their theoretical college training. These skills are very particular to the position for which they are being trained, and as trainees, they are not paid what a regular employee earns. In this way, companies make a very small and low-risk investment in creating their own employee pools. Those who cannot perform at the end of the training period are told to leave and must start the

whole process again with another company. Someone could thus spend years in a position without having achieved a full salary for his level of skill, a pattern similar to that found in call centers, although in call centers there is far less of an opportunity for upward mobility. (p. 79)

Vora details the qualification process as “actively forming”, but it is ultimately reactive to the “outsourcing interests” which are determined by the demands of the countries outsourcing labor. There is a great degree of skill specificity, which is a function of the IT industry encompassing a gamut of areas that are constantly evolving, but this prohibits transferability of such skills to other jobs. As a result, Vora describes that there is, in Bangalore, a “general sense of temporariness and lack of future stability” (p. 80). Ironically, the highly skilled professionals are subject to unstable temporality and economic insecurities that are usually attributed to the labor dynamics within the realm of unskilled work. What this shows is that the differentiation between highly skilled (IT professionals in India) and unskilled work (typical ECE worker) actually collapses when compared to the loss of power and individual agency that racialized people similarly experience.

In essence, Vora describes Indian workers who are training in perpetuity on the basis of hoping for a job, which may or may not be assigned due to the rapidly evolving demands from the developed markets. But the number of people training in perpetuity is not small, and they function as reserve labor pools ready to be deployed once necessary. The conceptualization of perpetual training recalls the increasing number of for-profit colleges who monetize the labor market demands for continued professional development. Cottom (2017) calls this network of U.S. colleges “Lower Ed.” These institutions offer highly specialized credentials and degrees in response to changing contours of the marketplace, but they do not actually prepare matriculating students with real skills nor map them towards a

real job. Cottom writes, “Lower Ed encompasses all credential expansion that leverages our faith in education without challenging its market imperatives and that preserves the status quo of race, class, and gender inequalities in education and work” (p. 12). In other words, Lower Ed capitalizes upon the very inequalities that draw people towards for-profit colleges. This, however, precludes critical examination of the market that creates these very inequalities. Together, Vora and Cottom’s frameworks of skill development and qualifications within the context of market demands provide additional lenses through which the changing landscape of ECE workforce qualifications can be contextualized as being produced by and continuing to produce systemic inequities.

The labor pool also recalls historical precedents in colonial labor models. Through the various histories of imperial expansions, the sourcing of colonized labor has been justified by colonizers’ claims of underqualified workforces. Through such rhetoric, worker shortages were artificially constructed. Revisiting the fraught history of the *bracero* program offers an example of how shortages are constructed. The program began as a “wartime expedient” through negotiations between the United States and the Mexican governments during World War II (Barrera, 1979, p. 117). After the war ended, the Korean war and allied US support through its military presence abroad continued to exacerbate labor shortages in the homeland. This prompted the program’s extension and formalization into law. Agricultural employers lobbied to keep the program operating for the economic benefits of keeping labor costs low. However, when the numbers of laborers grew beyond those officially documented as part of the *bracero* program, employers silently enabled the growth of undocumented workers and instead positioned them as surplus worker strikebreakers to keep wages low. Eventually, US government intervened. The increase in regulation and subsequent deportations of the undocumented workers was used by employers to claim

labor shortages. These employers then leveraged political pressure to grow the labor supply in order to meet demands created by this artificial shortage.

These “shortages” have justified first world colonization and importation of workers through the developing world, and the political economy of schools and education is not exempt from this pattern of labor allocation. Following the passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), schools were required to employ teachers qualified in their subject areas, and the need was greatest for teachers of STEM subjects. The K-12 teacher pipeline, at the time of NCLB, was unprepared to supply the requisite number of qualified teachers. As a result, due to the exigence of being compliant with NCLB standards, school districts looked overseas to source qualified, English-speaking teachers who met academic qualifications to teach specialized math and science classes (Bartlett, 2014). While this may have been a reasonable short-term solution, there is a preponderance of data that indicates a growing number of schools employing migrant teachers, or Overseas Trained Teachers (OTT). Deeper discussion of high teacher turnover due to OTT’s adjustment difficulty, displacement of tenured teachers because of OTTs, and tensions between the latter groups are beyond the scope of this project. The precedent of OTTs staffing K-12 schools is relevant to the ECE workforce insofar as what prompted the dependence upon migrant teachers was the institutionalization of higher levels of formal education. The importation of migrant teachers precludes the opportunity to examine the systemic causes for qualified teacher shortage. But, before hastening to meet the need of this alleged shortage, it is necessary to interrogate what prevents the U.S. from preparing and training their own HQTs?

Through this chapter I have argued that the emphasis on workers’ qualifications are tied to constructions of growing labor needs and shortages. For the ECE workforce, the

shift towards requiring a bachelor's degree to increase care quality qualifies as a need-blind recommendation. It ignores the multi-faceted oppressions and difficulties that the ECE worker experiences. Given the historical barriers to higher education experience by the demographic nexus represented by the typical childhood worker (single, working-class, woman of color), this ultimately threatens her ability to maintain her vocation. Without attending to the existing socio-economic and racial inequities within the workforce and considerations of necessary interventions that provide equitable access to greater attainment of ECE credits and/or higher levels of relevant education, the institutionalization of degree requirements will create a racial and economic hierarchy *within* the ECE workforce as well as posing a material threat of vocational displacement to those without formal credentials. Despite ECE receiving greater political priority and national investment since Nixon's veto of CCDA, the dominant emphasis on teacher qualifications reflects a racial and class bias that has consistently been part of the ideological "root" surrounding early childhood infrastructure. Unexamined support for a bachelor's degree mandates only further penalize the typical ECE worker, whose ongoing economic insecurity and threat of displacement exemplifies abandonment of the social justice agenda so often claimed by proponents of education.

Chapter 3

Disparate Impacts on Women of Color

In the previous chapter, I explicate how requiring the ECE workforce to attain a bachelor's degree is biased and inequitable. In this chapter, I will specifically address the workforce's overrepresentation by women and demonstrate how the educational requirements that seek to professionalize working class women of color are fundamentally hostile to them. Put another way, women are at a disadvantage even before they enter the workforce.

To begin, it is important to establish that many ECE classrooms are staffed not just by ECE teachers but also many assistant teachers and aides who hold fewer credentials. The difference is generally captured—by the BLS, for example—within their categorization as “child care workers” versus the fully credentialed “preschool teacher.” In many centers, the number of assistants and aides outnumber lead teachers, but they are counted equally to maintain compliant adult to student ratios. The number of ECE credits attained by assistants and aides may vary state by state, but the differences are slight. In California for example, a child care center director is required to either have a GED plus 15 semester units from an accredited college, or an AA in child development and 3-4 years of teaching experience in a licensed child care center. An ECE teacher is required to have 12 postsecondary semester units from an accredited college and 6 months of work experience. An aide is required to have 6 ECE units (Stipek, 2018, p. 73). The discussion about biased requirements from the

previous chapter are targeted towards lead teachers. How, then, do these mandates affect the rest of the workforce, which is made up of as many or more assistant teachers and aides? It is only a matter of time before the qualifications debate will threaten the employment of workers with lesser credits and/or credentials. Given the wage differential between aides and lead teachers, such implementation will exacerbate the existing workforce hierarchy. Institutions of accreditation already seem to anticipate this, and the preponderance of credential pathways must be examined in order to evaluate how equitably they are designed for women.

The emphasis on greater teacher qualifications since the passage of NCLB has led institutions to create many programs as pathways towards attaining teaching credentials. This especially impacts the existing workforce and their ability to stay competitively employed while incoming groups of ECE workers will increasingly hold four-year degrees. In California, for example, there are 114 community colleges, and all have some version of an ECE or child development program through which postsecondary credits can be earned. But for the typical ECE worker, attending open-access institutions like community colleges can be an obstacle because there are geographic or locational barriers to physically attend class, scheduling conflicts with work or concurrent teaching obligations, family and home responsibilities, and difficulties paying the tuition up-front.

For this reason, online learning is an attractive option for attaining necessary postsecondary credits. Aside from the number of nondegree extension programs offered by very large accredited universities, such as UCLA, many institutions that offer credential pathways are actually for-profit. And while online education lowers the barriers related to attending traditional postsecondary institutions, there are significant risks associated with attendance at for-profit colleges. To the extent that the current and future ECE workforce

will turn to such institutions to maintain their employment, it is critical to examine their role and effect on women.¹⁵

Recently, New America (2018) reported their analysis of data released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) showing how women bore more financial costs in their attainment of nondegree credentials than their male counterparts. They state:

More than two-thirds (69 percent) of women at the sub-baccalaureate level prepared for their most important nondegree credential by enrolling in a college, technical school, or trade school program—all potentially costly methods of preparation. In contrast, more than half of men at the sub-baccalaureate level had access to classes or training from a company, association, union, or private instructor to prepare for their most important nondegree credential. Education provided by a company, association, or union is more likely to be provided free of cost to the student compared with education provided by a postsecondary institution. Only 37 percent of women with similar education and credentials accessed these forms of preparation... Other research by New America indicates that, on an annual basis, women pay higher tuition after grant and scholarship aid is accounted for... The difference is likely due in part to the fact that women are far more likely to enroll in private for-profit institutions that tend to charge more for tuition than public two-year colleges. (p. 16)

Two themes emerge here, and I will address them separately. First, the findings show that women and men leverage social and professional networks differently in order to

¹⁵ Cottom (2017) notes that 65% of students in for-profit institutions are women. This number is not differentiated by major, but it can be inferred from the professional demographic profile that the percentage of women who declare early childhood education as their emphasis area will likely be closer to 90%.

finance their education. As capitalism has diminished the value of women's non-market work, it has done the same to the non-market networks of women. As a result, men utilize their existing networks and women must purchase a new one by way of an educational institution. The logic of purchasing a network is not unique. Many individuals who pursue a Master's in Business Administration, for example, are seeking to transition from one profession to another by way of forging strategic connections through a network of colleagues. Attaining an MBA is extremely costly, however, because in general there is limited financial support from academic institutions for master's degrees. As a result, many MBA students take on loans that average hundreds of thousands of dollars. This, however, is predicated on the expectation that post-MBA earnings will offset this loan debt. Similar logic underwrites the willingness of law school students to bound themselves to debt. But for the ECE worker who seeks to upgrade her credentials in order to remain employed, there is little guarantee that loan debt can be offset within a reasonable amount of time based on her future earnings. Whitebook documents that following the passage of the Head Start Reauthorization Act (HSRA), 50% of Head Start Pre-K teachers held bachelor's degrees. But this did not result in a meaningful pay premium (Whitebook, 2014). If greater educational attainment did not increase the earnings for lead teachers, this is reason enough to believe that the impact for the aides and assistant teachers will be nil.

It is impossible to read these findings as separate from women's history of being disciplined, domesticated, and a default secondary labor market. In the seminal book *Women, Race and Class* (1981), Davis laments how the "obstinate primitiveness of household labor" has continued to be borne by women despite their formal entry into the labor force. Trask (2014) expounds further, "Women tend not to fit the ideal of the independent worker who fully exploits his or her own potential in a competitive environment. Yet this is one of the

cornerstones of market theory. Due to their social roles, women are tied to complex social relationships in their roles as caregivers and cannot realize their own potential in the way that is demanded under a philosophical orientation that favors enterprising, individually oriented workers” (p. 207). In other words, women have to pay for additional access—in the form of another network, degree, resource—because their first network is fully occupied with the home and family. In addition, the labor market’s orientation is fundamentally hostile to the complex relational roles that women perform.

The second theme from this finding is that women tend to enroll in more costly, for-profit institutions. This is related to my previous point that women resort to purchasing the path towards developing a professional network as opposed to leveraging an existing one because it is deemed outside of the market. Let us recall the typical ECE worker who is “first-generation, minority, low-income female dependent on a monthly wage close to or below the poverty line to support her family.” She is not in a position of being financially supported by her family like male workers usually are, but rather, she is supporting them. She is also a mother or primary caregiver herself, and all of these characteristics qualify her as a non-traditional student. Cottom posits why the for-profit institution attracts this type of non-traditional student through her profile of one student, London, whom she was acquainted for through her research:

London is who many of us think of when we think about people who attend for-profit colleges. For profit colleges are said to be either “predators” or “nimble critters” in how they effectively recruit (if not graduate) millions of students considered to be “low status.” Low-status students may not have been pegged for any traditional college pathway because they are older (than, say, twenty-four years of age) or are parents with dependent children (especially

if they are mothers and heads of household; i.e. the dreaded single mother). Even if they do not have children, they may be place-bound because culture or commitment dictates that they take care of a parent or a cousin or younger siblings. They may have a general equivalency degree (GED) as opposed to a traditional high school diploma. Even if they have a high school diploma, they probably took basic math instead of calculus, a second English class instead of a foreign language. Because of this, even if they aspire to college, they may find themselves with a high school diploma that does not meet or exceed the minimum admissions requirements at their state's university system. (p. 89)

The non-traditional student, in other words, is a manifestation of multiple systemic inequalities. And her selection of a for-profit institution is one that marks a strong desire to transcend a long continuum of being stratified on multiple levels. Now, London is of a certain age with a gamut of long-term adult responsibilities. She really has no other choice but to leverage her *hope* of improving her prospects for socio-economic mobility. If London truly was purchasing the power of a professional network and pathway towards professionalization, then her investment may be reasonably justified. Cottom explains, however, that the only thing produced by London's purchase is the commodification of her lack of time, resources, networks, physical mobility, and prospects for job growth. The winner of this commodification, of course, is not London but the institution. The latter does make every accommodation to lower traditional barriers to higher education through affective recruitment process, rolling enrollment, instant course access, expedient (i.e. loan) financing, and low-pressure completion. But access alone does not positively change London's trajectory.

Cottom contends, however, that for-profit colleges are not to be blamed but rather, their role should be contextualized as yet another inequity resulting from “labor market failures” (p. 166). The market has placed the burden of developing greater skills and human capital upon each individual, which only functions to sustain their deep vulnerabilities and socio-economic insecurities. For working class women of color like London, there are so few options that remain for her to improve her socio-economic mobility that the prospects of going into debt is entirely worth the risk. As Cottom argues, the predatory recruitment practices by for-profit colleges is absolutely pervasive and egregious. But, by referring to “labor market failures” she suggests that it is imperative to inquire what causes the workers’ vulnerabilities that constitute such prime markets for predatory lending.

For the women of the ECE workforce (which is almost its entirety), the growing pressures to maintain one’s professional development without accommodations for their complex social roles only exacerbate their social, economic, and educational underdevelopment. For working class women of color, vocational options are further limited so they are more susceptible to purchasing postsecondary credits as “an insurance policy against low wages, unemployment, and downward mobility” (Cottom, 2017, p. 37). As emphasized above, however, the earning prospects do not justify the costs for attaining credits at for-profit colleges. They incur far more than just the tuition debt. Cottom details further:

For-profit colleges perpetuate long-standing inequalities in gendered work, care work, racial wealth inequalities, and statistical discrimination because they grant credentials that are riskier than most traditional degrees. However that risk is not entirely their fault. Whether or not its reasons are good or justifiable, traditional higher education has erected barriers between its institutions and for-profit

colleges: transfer policies, negative bias in admissions, and hiring practices. While those barriers may serve to protect their students earning traditional college credentials, they trap those with for-profit college credits or credentials in an educational ghetto.
(p. 181-182)

Here, Cottom details the lack of positive futurity and professional prospects for those with for-profit credentials. The predicament is worst for women of color, who single-handedly rely on the hope that these credentials will lead them to a better socio-economic position. Instead they are stricken with greater debt than before—certainly more than their male counterparts—and they will always be in competition for those with a higher degree (see Chapter 2). Educational inequity—as does debt—compounds with time over generations. In Chapter 1, I discussed Folbre’s conceptualization of the poor single mother’s implicit tax rate of 100%. I have shown that the ECE worker bears the costs of their own education and it is compounded by the prospects of low earnings that will keep her in debt—this constitutes an exponential tax rate that cannot be offset within the current systems of labor and education.

In this chapter, I have argued that the requirement of higher education for the ECE workforce generates extremely gendered costs, and they are exacerbated for women of color. To return to New America’s non-negotiables, this chapter names inequities, biases and how they disproportionately subject working-class women of color to grave socio-economic inequities. Cottom’s intervention enables us to analyze the conflation between the systems of education and capitalism, and how they do not operate in mutually exclusive ways. Schools, while mission-based, are also employers. And to the extent that they employ labor and participate in the labor market to source and retain their workers, they must be considered complicit parties in creating labor market failures. Furthermore, despite the contemporary

moment that celebrates gender parity and female empowerment as they pertain to professional and educational opportunities, this chapter contends that such progress is conditional. Women of color are not free to leverage such opportunities. ECE workforce reform must account for these costs if it seeks to realize true equity. When access, opportunity, and futurity are no longer conditioned against them, the improved lives of working-class women of color will become the indisputable proxy indicator of ECE workforce transformation.

Chapter 4

Border Crossings

In this chapter, I will engage the wage dilemma in a more productive way than simply advocating to lift the wage floor. Focus on the latter depoliticizes the connection between compensation and larger systemic injustices including neoliberal ideologies, social contracts, labor market failures, and racial hierarchies. Through an intersectional analysis, I aim to politicize the multiple oppressions upon the ECE workforce and deepen the reform discourse so that it may be expanded towards long-term, self-sustaining, equitable transformation. I will begin with an analysis of select economic data to conceptualize a division between consumer and producer classes. By considering the high cost of living in cities like the Bay Area as an extreme example, I will argue that ECE workers are increasingly crossing borders of race and class to maintain their employment. Bartlett (2014) and Vora (2015), through their respective interventions, illuminate the logics of colonial labor in operation through the labors of Filipina migrant teachers and Indian call center agents. I will utilize their frameworks to illuminate how a similar logic operates within the ECE workforce. Contextualizing their labors in this way illuminates how their stratification is not isolated within the educational ecosystem but, rather, relates to a globally racialized lower-resource labor market conditioned to serve higher-resource nations. I examine the workforce in this way to suggest that there emerges a Foucauldian biopolitics of education

that operates by controlling racialized people. This deems education as a nation-building enterprise based upon the control of racialized worker-educators.

In urban contexts with large income gaps, the typical childhood worker provides privatized childcare services that enables reproduction of wealthier households. They themselves, however, are not able to purchase the same services for their own children because of their own limited earnings. Nowhere is this more apparent in cities like San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area, where the most disparate income gaps are recorded. Here, monthly prices of childcare far exceed the average monthly earnings of an ECE worker. What exactly do the workforce earnings look like? Following are figures that compare two states' historical and recent hourly wages alongside the Consumer Price Index (CPI):

State	1997 Real Mean Hourly Wages	2013 Actual Mean Hourly Wages	Change
California	\$11.26	\$11.86	+\$0.60 or 5%
New Jersey	\$11.73	\$11.23	-\$0.50 or 4%

Source: CSCCE 2014

Figure 1. 1997 vs. 2013 Wage Comparison

	1997	2013	Change
Consumer Price Index	160.5	233.0	72.5 or 45%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 2. 1997 vs. 2013 Consumer Price Index

Figure 1. shows mean childcare worker wages for California and New Jersey, adjusted for 2013 inflation dollars. California saw a 5% increase, while New Jersey's rates fell 4%. In contrast, in Figure 2, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 45% within the

same time period, showing how single-digit wage growth has been far outpaced by the cost of living.

The income gaps within the most densely populated cities is a preponderant concern in public discourse. Figure 3 shows the income gap in San Francisco, which is currently one of the most expensive cities to live in.

San Francisco Income Averages
High (95 th Percentile): \$397,000
Low (20 th Percentile): \$36,273
ECE Worker Average: \$22,500

Source: Brookings Institution, CSCCE

Figure 3. San Francisco Income Gap 2016

Figure 3 lacks some important details—such as the number of households, persons within each household, and numbers of dependents or children—but given the number of dual-income households and increasing rates of working mothers within the job market, it can be inferred that the social reproduction of the households whose income is above the 20th percentile is enabled by the availability of institutional childcare. Put another way, this income gap shows there is a stark bifurcation of those who can purchase childcare and those who provide it. According to 2018 market data, the average monthly cost of childcare in San Francisco is \$1,955. This surpasses the average monthly earnings of the ECE worker, and as such she is priced out of purchasing childcare for her own children.

This labor model of working-class women supporting the social reproduction of upper-class households recalls Parreñas' (2001) conceptualization of the “three-tier transfer” of care labor in which women from lower-resource countries emigrate towards higher-resource countries to support their households as domestic workers and caregivers. This

forces the migrant women (in Parreñas' case, Filipina domestic workers) to hire "cheaper" caregivers for her own family. Thus, the care chain is not only highly gendered, it is highly racialized and reproduces a class-based economic hierarchy.

What can also be inferred from Figure 3, is not only that the typical ECE worker cannot afford to pay for her childcare, but in light of the Bay Area's highly inflated rental rates, it is unlikely that she resides in the same locale of the childcare center in which she works. I will qualify the worker's commute from home to work and back as a border crossing because of the racial and economic homogeneity of wealthy neighborhoods within densely populated cities within the Bay Area. Bartlett's examination of migrant teachers from the Philippines who teach at hard-to-staff California public schools provides a productive lens through which to understand the catalysts, stakes, and worker vulnerabilities produced by teachers who cross borders.

When tracing immigration or migration of communities, it is critical to examine push and pull factors. The passage of NCLB in 2001 required high school teachers at publicly funded schools to hold postsecondary degrees in their teaching subject. This was also the catalyst for policymakers to consider higher degrees for the teaching workforce writ large. NCLB's preference for teacher subject specialism created a crisis at schools. Not surprisingly, these schools were also chronically underfunded. As such, high staff turnover became the primary pull factor. To increase the pipeline of highly qualified teachers (HQT), schools looked abroad to many countries. During this time, California schools were particularly drawn to the Philippines for their market of English-speaking teachers with advanced degrees in math and science, the most in-demand subjects. At home, Filipina teachers were also socialized and prepared to seek professional opportunities abroad because

of the country's history of sending laborers—especially women—overseas to support their remittance-based home economy (Parrenas, 2001; Bartlett, 2014).

Bartlett documents that for these migrant teachers, there are two main push factors: the extrinsic rewards of higher pay in the U.S. and the status gained from having taught at an American school. The teachers were socialized to believe that—should they return to the Philippines and continue teaching—the experience of teaching in any American school could be leveraged to increase their professional status and respectability. I will address each factor separately while illuminating parallels to my conceptualization of border crossings by ECE workers.

Higher rates of compensation for similar work across different countries is a complex matter that requires contextualization of countries' roles within the globalized world economy. While the pay rates for the Filipino teachers who migrated to California were not disclosed as part of Bartlett's study, they were brought to the U.S. on temporary visas. This subjected them to different regulations and oversight from the local workforce. Let us presume that their compensation rates were comparable, if slightly less than the permanent teacher staff. I will argue that although the migrant teachers departed the Philippines to receive higher pay than they would have received from their home country, they bore intrinsic costs incommensurate to the earnings premium. This is due to the well-documented fact that female migrant laborers who depart the Philippines leave behind their entire family, and they are single-handedly responsible for renegotiating their role as mothers, primary caregivers, and family supporter while abroad (Francisco-Menschavez, 2018).

Filipina migrant teachers are, a result of their temporary visas, also subject to perpetual job insecurity that pressures them to outperform in hopes of receiving permanent

sponsorship from their school. But this is incredibly difficult given the conditions of work. Bartlett describes the harsh reality that few migrant teachers are prepared for: “All too often movements of teachers require teachers to rise to the top of the developing country’s teacher labor market in order to ascend to the bottom of the industrialized nation’s labor market” (p. 9). This “bottom” is related to several factors. One factor is their realization that the track of teaching in a public school is one of the most undercompensated professions. As a result, though their earnings relative to working in the Philippines may be higher, their buying power while living in America is weaker. This is especially visible if they are staffed at inner city public schools where there is great income polarity and highly inflated housing prices preclude their ability to find decent housing. Another factor is the experience of being racialized. As non-white, migrant teachers are racialized as ethnic and undifferentiated from students who are similarly racialized. This subjects them to differential treatment by both students and faculty. Finally, due to the fact that hard to staff schools that are already mired with financial and socio-political vulnerabilities, migrant teachers are perceived as having limited impact.

I contend that there are many parallels between the work experiences of migrant teachers’ labors and ECE workers. To begin, there are similar push factors that pressure both groups of workers out of their communities of origin. It has been documented that the availability of early childhood education and quality childcare options is positively correlated with the community’s income levels. In other words, there are more ECE job opportunities in affluent communities. But the financial and social homogeneity of such neighborhoods preclude the typical ECE worker’s abilities to reside in the same community. She also cannot afford the tuition to send her child to institutions like the ones that employ her, so her own child does not receive the same quality of care and early education. Her commute to and

from work, for instance in the Bay Area, may take hours from her day. These borders, however, have to be crossed in order to remain employed. There are extrinsic costs, such as the time lost in commuting as well as the distance away from one's "home", but the extrinsic reward of gainful employment remains the ultimate push factor.

These border crossings are accompanied by costs unique to the ECE workforce. The increasing pressures to have higher credentials without clear pathways or explicit accommodations towards her attainment of them create a similar job insecurity, in which she feels she must choose between professional development or work. But this is a false choice, because she cannot afford *not* to work. The affective labor required by ECE work makes it difficult to determine whether the intrinsic costs justify the extrinsic reward of gainful employment. Effective ECE depends upon positive teacher-child relationships which involves a high degree of affective labor, which I will construct as an intrinsic cost.

Whitaker et al. (2015) writes, "teachers must regulate their own emotions and model positive behaviors, such as having calm and predictable reactions, listening empathetically when children express negative emotions, and sharing feelings of joy when children express positive emotions. Much like parents, teachers must be sensitive, responsive, and predictable in their relationships with children to foster children's secure attachment and social-emotional competence" (p. 57). This affective or emotional work, which requires a degree of self-control and a certain degree of self-denial, is a condition of caregiving work in general. But coupled with economic insecurity, affective work by the ECE worker in support of a community in which she is not a member becomes a doubly difficult performance. Given the ways in which studies describe "workplace stress" due to various nonphysical factors (Whitaker, et al. 2015), I contend that the cultural, economic, and racial misalignment

between a worker and her environment—which includes the students—are highly correlated with the fact that she is crossing racial and socio-economic borders for work.

Similarly, Vora considers the amount of affective labor required by Indian call center agents related to their work of crossing racial and class borders. She writes that the agent “must become familiar with the cultural context of the customer in order to effectively soothe agitated callers and make the contracting corporation appear accessible and approachable. She must work to follow and respond to emotional and conversational cues and to maintain a polite, patient, and attentive demeanor during the conversation in a way that seems authentic. When the data form or Indian agent is projected successfully, it produces value for the company employing the call center” (Vora, 2015, p. 46). Both the ECE worker and the call center agents contribute to reproduction (social and capitalistic, respectively) that they cannot themselves partake in. Both requires self-denial and a participation in a performance that is “oriented toward producing a system and culture that is successful only when they absent themselves” (Vora, p. 51). This, Vora argues, ultimately impacts the agents’ quality of life. Privileging the consumer’s life and well-being over her own despite repeatedly experiencing environmental or affective misalignment and conflict for the sake of maintaining employment, ultimately reinforces the notion that the workers’ life is not as valued as those she serves—figuratively and literally.

I utilize Vora’s intervention on the structure of internationally outsourced labor in order to establish its similarity to the function of education in our contemporary moment. Both systems are nation-building—or rather, nation-serving enterprises. The logics of these systems do not center the lives of the subjects performing the work that propagate the systemic power. Indian IT professionals are under constant pressure to professionally develop, but this is not on their own terms nor towards a future of their own making. Their

labor is in perpetual service at the disposal of the nations that purchase their work. Within current educational reform discourse, often underwritten by national interests in STEM skill development, the task of highly qualified teachers is to train the future's highly skilled workforce. Without the latter, the logic dictates, the nation cannot compete in the global economy. But in its current design, the very ability of the teacher to participate and belong in a highly skilled workforce is compromised at her own expense.

The border crossing of the ECE worker, migrant teacher, and the figurative crossings by call center agents share the fact that they are performing paid and unpaid labors *while* incurring material and immaterial costs. That these costs are not visible or factored into their identity as workers or vocational compensation is what enables their exploitation. In its current form, the discourse of ECE workforce reform is disconnected from its membership in the K-12 educational ecosystem. What I contend in this chapter is that not only is ECE an integral part of the domestic educational ecosystem, it is also part and parcel of the construction of education as a nation-building system. As such, its labors occupy a unique subject position relative to the nation. Are ECE workers treated as integral members and citizens of the nation or only as conditional servers of the nation? My conceptualization of border crossings introduces a shift in reform discourse by contextualizing and politicizing the position of ECE workers within the logic of a colonial labor model in which workers are exclusively perceived and treated as outsiders of the citizenry.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

If the material conditions of the present are in fact partially borrowed from the future, and only some futures have been mortgaged to support these conditions, including how that debt will be paid and who will pay it, we must consider how people imagine the future as an act of present political and material importance.

—Kalindi Vora¹⁶

Through the previous chapters, I illuminate the particularities of the ECE worker through various sites and comparisons. What emerges throughout these chapters is an inquiry rooted within the Ethnic Studies paradigm. It seeks the location of power and investigates how that power affects the ECE worker. This requires the production of an intersectional, multi-layered politics. By doing so, an attempt has been made to center the labors, material realities, and humanity of these laborers.

One of the major limitations of this project, however, is that the very voices constituting this workforce have not been included. An expansion of this analysis may include these voices, which may deepen the notions of border crossings and complicate the types of affective labors and rewards that constitute the lived experience of ECE workers. In an alternate concept for this thesis, I designed a study that conceptualized value, expertise, and affective labor with regard to ECE labors. I intended to operationalize these concepts through qualitative interviews of both ECE workers as well as families who sent their

¹⁶ Vora, K. (2015). *Life Support: Biocapital and the New History of Outsourced Labor*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 147.

children for the care of these workers. Through this study, there is potential to challenge dominant perceptions that this work is unskilled as well as explore the degree of alignment and/or relevance of current reform discourse to the experiences of the current ECE workforce. Through continuing my graduate studies and research, I intend to develop this qualitative study and expand the concept of biopolitics as it pertains to this segment of the educational ecosystem.

Through my involvement in the early childhood education ecosystem as a parent, my position as an insider to the childcare community with respect to my understanding and participation within it informs my ability to speak about the issues that are hidden or unfamiliar to those outside of the field. I am, however, aware of my position as an outsider to actual childcare workers because I am not one by vocation or training. This limits my ability to fully consider the life and world of the workers who are centered in my study and this is something I attempt to proactively discern in my work.

Despite these limitations, I hope I have contributed a meaningful and critical point of entry into current ECE workforce reform discourse. California's recent announcement of a budgetary windfall for ECE proves the exigence of reform. In January 2019, Gavin Newsom, then governor-elect of California, proposed a \$2 billion investment in early childhood programs. Several months later, at the time of this writing, Governor Newsom has formally announced his commitment to "affordability" as it pertains to early childhood education and has since provided general allocation details for his massive budget.¹⁷ Most of the general allocations are designed to improve accessibility to affordable care and capacity

¹⁷ See <https://www.vcstar.com/story/news/2019/01/06/newsom-propose-nearly-2-billion-early-childhood-programs/247030002/> for pre-election intention. See <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2019/05/07/governor-newsom-and-first-partner-launch-parents-agenda-as-part-of-broader-affordability-push/> for administration announcement.

of existing facilities. There is a provision for “investing in child care workers” but this remains a very vague directive. I surmise that this will materialize into an initiative around workforce compensation increase but highly likely to be suspended in bureaucratic, or even meritocratic, complications.

It is highly concerning—though not surprising—that none of these budgetary allocations meaningfully center the workforce. Nor are said initiatives positioned to examine or reform the educational and apprenticeship pipeline of the ECE workforce, which I have argued are the sites of oppression but also potential transformation. As Vora states in this conclusion’s epigraph, the present is inextricably tied to an imagination of future. The current state of ECE has been underwritten by the labors of countless women of color, whose futures of realizing a more stable, balanced, and full life have been discounted and “mortgaged” for the growth and gain of those holding greater social, racial, and economic capital. These futures inextricably involve their children, and we must ask ourselves whether the state of ECE considers all or only some of the future generation of “political and material importance”. Without centering the ECE workers, whose sacrifices include the futurity of their own families and children, true equity has yet to be realized.

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