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**‘Children can wind you up!’:
learning to labour in the nursery**

by

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Paper presented at the Gender and Education Association Conference
Revisiting Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Education
University of Sheffield, 14-16 April 2003.

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‘Children can wind you up!’: learning to labour in the nursery

Helen Colley, Lifelong Learning Institute, University of Leeds

Paper presented at the Gender and Education Association Conference ‘*Revisiting Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Education*’, University of Sheffield, 14-16 April 2003.

Introduction

[T]he problems of specifying caring work, and particularly the emotional labour which is part of caring work, [can be attributed] to the minimal attention which has been paid to it. The low profile and low status historically attributed to such work contribute to this, for it is a form of labour which is recognised not when the outcome is right, but on those occasions when it goes wrong. The product itself is invisible...the value of the labour is as hidden as the value of the routine management of emotion (James, 1989: 28).

This paper revisits feminist perspectives on ‘learning to labour’. It is specifically concerned with how women learn to do emotional labour in caring occupations, an under-researched theme in the under-researched field of post-compulsory education and training (PCET). In it, I explore the learning experiences of a group of trainee nursery nurses – almost all of them teenage girls – during the first year of their course (a fuller case study can be found in Colley, 2002a). Their narratives of workplace learning centred on the emotional content of their work, and I trace the impact of this labour on their dispositions. The course is one of 16 learning sites in the project *Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education* (TLC), which forms part of the ESRC’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme. My approach is a critical interpretivist one (Anderson, 1989), drawing particularly on the work of Bates (1990, 1991, 1994) and Hochschild (1983), and on feminist readings of Foucault, Marx, and Bourdieu.

Learning to labour

In his book *Learning to Labour*, Willis famously asked: ‘how do working class kids get working class jobs?’ (1977: title page). His ethnographic study of disaffected boys – ‘the lads’ – showed how class and gender combined as they expressed their resistance to schooling through an aggressive masculinity and a disruptive counter-school culture. They endured their final year of compulsory education by ‘dossing’, ‘blagging’, ‘wagging’, and ‘having a laff’. This very resistance, however, led them straight from school into low-paid, low-skilled, low-status jobs that even unsuccessful middle class kids would not do. The appearance of choice on their part did not reflect naïve, meritocratic notions of ‘ability’, nor the free-market, consumerist view of choice that has come to dominate policy understandings of career decision-making. Willis argued instead that it expressed a distinctive cultural pattern that partially ‘penetrated’ (or understood), but also reproduced, the social structuring of particular working class trajectories.

However, young people’s school-to work transitions have changed a great deal since then. While a majority of school-leavers entered full-time employment thirty years ago, the youth labour market has since collapsed, so that only a small minority do so today

(Rikowski, 2001). Post-16 transitions have become extended, fragmented and far less certain (Ball *et al*, 2000, Furlong and Cartmel, 1997), and around three quarters of all young people now continue in full-time post-compulsory education and training (PCET). An important element of this massive growth in PCET has been the expansion of vocational education and training (VET), both in FE and in work-based youth training. Yet this is an under-researched field, where academic inquiry has predominantly pursued instrumental questions of economics rather than investigate the social and cultural processes of VET (Bates, 1991).

Learning to Labour has also been criticised for its exclusive focus on boys' transitions to work. A wealth of feminist studies of young people's transitions (reviewed in Francis, 2002) reveal girls' tendency to enter strongly gender-stereotyped occupations in the personal service and care of others. Steedman (1982) and Francis (1996) have shown that in primary school, little girls' future aspirations are already shaped by gendered and classed identities learned in the home and family. Arnot describes the overwhelming emphasis on women's domesticity in school texts as nothing less than an 'ideological bombardment' (2002: 69). According to Gaskell (1992), domestic identities also dominate girls' career choices at secondary school. Using more recent evidence, both Hodkinson *et al* (1996) and Francis (2002) show that such identities are now less likely to result in full-time unpaid work in the home, since many young women now expect to enter the labour market for the longer term. Nevertheless, this evidence still confirms their effect in the continued gender-stereotyping of career choice. Girls expect to get jobs that are constructed as 'feminine' – often caring for others – and avoid more technical jobs regarded as 'masculine'. The opposite is true for boys. Consequently, we need to differentiate Willis's category of 'working class kids' along gender lines at least.

A feminist perspective on learning to labour

Bates (1990, 1991, 1994) applies a critical feminist perspective to the process of learning to labour. She re-frames Willis's question to ask: how do working class *girls* get working class, *gender-stereotyped* jobs? She argues that, to answer this question, we have to investigate what these jobs entail. She also shifts the focus from the point of transition at 16 to the subsequent process of entry into the labour market through a lengthy period of VET. The group Bates studied were working class girls – 'the care girls' – who had left school with few qualifications, had been rejected from their preferred career options (such as childcare), and found themselves instead on a full-time youth training (YT) scheme in care of the elderly, with one day per week off-the-job training with a YT provider. The care girls had to undertake a number of tasks they initially found very unpleasant and distressing, and much of their learning centred on coping with incontinence, violence and death. To do this, they had to learn above all to control and manage their own feelings of disgust, anger, sorrow and fear, and reconstruct them differently. They also had to control, manage and reconstruct the feelings of their patients.

Bates argues that VET contributed two significant social and cultural processes to learning the labour of elderly care. Firstly, it exercised a 'screening' effect, recruiting and then further sifting those girls who had suitable dispositions. Secondly, it also operated in a disciplinary way (cf. Foucault, 1991) to socialise suitable girls into the work, and exclude those who were unable to adapt to the prevailing vocational culture. Although their off-the-job tutors and the assessment criteria for their National Vocational Qualification conveyed a sensitive version of caring *for* people as also caring *about* them, the culture of the workplace demanded more 'toughness' and resilience. Those who

were ‘mardy’ were characterised by others as ‘bleeding, whining Minnies’, and tended to drop out. Others who were too ‘tough’ and, for example, reacted violently when provoked by patients, were also filtered out.

Those most likely to settle in to the job were from families in the lower strata of the working class: girls who had already had to care for others, and had learned to endure privation, aggression and stress within the home. ‘They are hardened by their previous experience, but crucially *constrained by gender* from developing a pattern of violent response’ (Bates, 1994: 28, original emphasis). They were used to exercising the ‘feminine virtues’ of self-control and self-denial. VET mediated between these social and cultural resources that girls had acquired from their family backgrounds, and the labour market opportunities available to them. A certain classed and gendered predisposition was necessary, *but not sufficient*, for success. Processes of habituation and acculturation through VET both on and off the job were required for them to adjust their disposition further, become the ‘right person for the job’, and feel that the job was ‘right for them’. Thus working class girls got working class, gender-stereotyped jobs.

Revisiting feminist perspectives on learning to labour

In my previous research on mentoring, I had become interested in the way that myths are used to promote the mentor’s role as one of self-sacrificing nurture, and to construct the process of mentoring as one of emotional labour (Colley, 2001 and in press, a,b). I drew on the study by Bates described above, and on other feminist analyses of emotional labour informed by the theories of Marx and Foucault (notably Hochschild, 1983, but see also Gilligan, 1995, Hughes, 2001, Walkerdine, 1992). More recently, as part of my work on the TLC project, I have been studying a vocational course in childcare. The data generated with the women and girls involved in this learning site during the first year of the research (it will continue for another two years) has resonated deeply with Bates’ stories of the ‘care girls’, and I draw on it in this paper to revisit feminist perspectives on learning to labour.¹ To do so I focus, as Bates did, on the way that the control, management, and reconstruction of feelings was central to students’ accounts of their learning in the workplace.

The methodological approach of the TLC project is founded on partnership between researchers based both in universities and FE colleges, and includes the active participation of the site tutors (see Bloomer and James, 2001). Some of the data is qualitative: repeated semi-structured interviews with the tutor, her team leader, and a sample of six students; researcher observations of the college course and work placements; and the tutor’s own reflective journal. Other data is quantitative: a questionnaire survey of all students in the site, and college and national statistical data. All personal names have been changed, and the college is anonymised to protect confidentiality. Let us turn now to the learning site itself.

¹ Another paper which forms a pair with this one (Colley, 2002b) focuses on the site’s tutor, and explores the interaction of the vocational culture of childcare with class and gender in her life history. A third paper (Colley *et al*, 2002) looks at the impact of vocational culture on student identity, and the production of ‘vocational habitus’, across this and two other VET sites in the TLC project: an all-female healthcare course (Tedder, 2002, see also Bloomer *et al*, 2002), and a male-dominated engineering course (James and Diment, 2002).

The CACHE Diploma learning site

Joanne Lowe is the tutor for this learning site, one of two groups who started the Level 3 CACHE Diploma in September 2001. This is a full-time, two-year course, half of which is taught in college, and half of which comprises work placements in nurseries and primary schools. It is an overwhelmingly female course, and only one of the 20 students who originally joined Joanne's group this year is male. The course is located in the department for health and social care, and recruits mainly school-leavers. Some students originally had higher career aspirations to become professional teachers or nurses, but performed poorly in their school exams, and (like the care girls) have had to lower their ambitions. The large majority of students go on to work in private nurseries. A recent OFSTED inspection rated teaching on the course as excellent, and it is held in high regard by the CACHE national examination board and by local employers.

Joanne and two of her three colleagues in the CACHE teaching team are former nursery nurses themselves, and they offer valued 'insider' expertise. Joanne herself dedicates a great deal of time to intensive academic support for individual students, some of whom entered this advanced level course with only two GCSE passes, and most of whom struggle with the written work required. She also helps organise a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, and provides a great deal of pastoral support for students and their parents. She is perceived as a very caring tutor, in whom students can confide. The promotion of equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice is central to her teaching role and to the team's ethos.

The vocational culture of childcare

The site reflects the fact that childcare in the UK is a heavily gender-stereotyped occupation: 99 per cent of nursery nurses are female. Within the broader field of early years education, it is low-status work, and nursery nurses are often subordinate to qualified teachers or healthworkers. They are also poorly paid, earning little more than supermarket shelf-stackers (Low Pay Unit, 2002). Nevertheless, the CACHE tutors place great emphasis on their view that nursery nursing is a *profession*. To a certain extent, as in healthcare occupations and professions such as nursing, acceptance of low pay is taken as a sign of genuine commitment to caring for others (Frykholm and Nitzler, 1993). Although tutors recognise that nursery nurses are treated as 'second-class citizens', they also argue that this means they care *about* the children they care *for*:

Joanne: I mean, if you've worked as a nursery nurse, the money's rubbish. You don't do it, you know, for any other reason than you love working with children and families. [...] Our students are really dedicated to the work.

Just as in care of the elderly, a feminised, nurturing ideal dominates official discourses about childcare:

There is an extraordinary international consensus among child-care researchers and practitioners about what quality child-care is: it is warm, supportive interactions with adults in a safe, healthy, and stimulating environment, where early education and trusting relationships combine to support individual children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development (Scarr, 1998: 102).

This ideal is enshrined in measures of quality that are widely used in childcare. Apart from various structural factors, the education of nursery nurses themselves is held to be a major determinant of quality (Blau, 1999). Consequently, one set of measures used internationally, the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS), focuses on the personal attributes that should be developed in the nursery nurse herself. She should display sensitivity, gentleness, enthusiasm, effort, and enjoy contact with children. Harshness and detachment are taken as contra-indications of quality (cf. Tietze *et al.*, 1996). This establishes a norm for the kind of person that one has to be – or to become – to succeed in childcare. The emphasis on ‘warmth’, ‘supportive and trusting relationships’ and on the emotional development of the child, alongside these personal attributes, suggests that the deployment of emotion by the worker herself is a key part of the job.

The CACHE tutors focus a great deal on this ‘unwritten’ curriculum of developing such personal attributes in their students, especially at the start of the course. They discuss how each group is ‘gelling’, and try to foster students’ ability to ‘bond’ emotionally with each other and with their tutors. Joanne’s team leader explained the importance of this process:

It’s the nature of the job. If you’re working as an early years worker, you’re always going to work as part of a team, and you have to get on with people. You have to get on with other adults, not just children... I think the sort of hidden curriculum of an early years course is getting to know people and working as a team.

Joanne describes the successful ‘gel’ exemplified by her second year group, at the same time giving a sense of how important close personal relationships with other women are for her:

The 16 to 19 year-olds, they’re nearly all girls, and we have such a banter in the classroom! My second years, I love every minute teaching with them, and we’ve got some right characters in there. We get on really well, we do the work, you know, I kept every single one of them that I started with. We’ve got really good relationships, and it’s not difficult to go in and teach them. You know, they’re respectful, but we have a laugh as well... I’ve got a feeling this lot [*the first-years*] are going to be the same. They’ve gelled, people that are teaching them have come in and said, like Maddie teaches both groups, ‘Your group have really gelled already’, you know, they’re chatty but they’re doing the work.

Andrew, the only male student in the learning site group, has also demonstrated his ability to bond in this way, and to integrate into female-dominated communities:

All my close friends are girls, I get on with girls, and this is what I really want to do...[The staff in my placement] are nice people, they’re really nice, and they talk to me like I’m not a student, if you know what I mean. They talk to me like I’m there, you know, I’m comfortable there.

But as the first-year group completed their first term, Joanne became particularly frustrated with two students, Sonya and Gaby. They led a small group who were persistently disruptive or absent, and who bullied other students, despite lengthy efforts on Joanne’s part to get them to integrate better. Eventually, she felt she had to set the college disciplinary procedures in motion:

With Gaby, I just tried and tried, and it's just not worked. It's just a real clash... If they do go, I'm so looking forward to next year, because I think that I'll really bond with the group now, and Gaby and Sonya, they've stopped me from doing that, and they've stopped the rest... I think the group will be nicer... It'll definitely be more cohesive if they go.

Developing close emotional bonds among the tutor group is therefore seen as an essential foundation for the work that students have to learn to perform in the nursery. Let us turn now to students' own accounts of their learning during the first year of the course.

Learning to labour in the nursery

When students discussed the new skills and knowledge they had gained, they talked about practical skills (such as preparing play materials, food, displays) and more cognitive learning (such as health matters, child development theory, equal opportunities legislation) acquired at college. However, alongside this prescribed curriculum, and the unwritten curriculum of emotional bonding, a further 'hidden' curriculum emerged as students talked about what they have learned as they participated in their work placements. Like the care girls, their narratives centred on coping with the emotional demands of the job, and revealed a vocational culture of detachment in the workplace which contrasts somewhat with the nurturing ideal that is officially promoted.

In a group tutorial discussion soon after the start of the course, following the students' first few days in placement, there were many expressions of delight at being with children. But the session also revealed events they experienced as far from pleasant: taking little boys to the toilet; finding oneself covered in children's 'puke' and 'wee'; and being hit by children. Joanne was at great pains to emphasise the correct behaviour students should display in these situations:

Joanne: Don't forget, you've got to stay cool and say, {*nonchalant tone*} 'Oh, that's not a very nice thing to do, is it?', and keep your own feelings under control.

By the end of their first year, the management of feeling had become a central theme in all the female students' narratives, Andrew – the only male student in the group – being the notable exception in this regard. The girls often talked about the difficulties and stress of dealing with physical injuries, tears, tantrums, aggression, disobedience and provocations:

The morning group [*of children*] are still tired and maungy, and in the afternoon, they're giddy and hyper... I was so tired after a week working at nursery... I don't know if I could do it again.

I asked one girl to go and get a book because we were waiting for story time. Well, she kicked up: 'I'm not getting a book! I'm not getting a book, I'm staying here!' So I took her into the cloakroom and I sat down with her, and by this point she was really, really hysterical, crying because she couldn't stay outside.

This involves working on their own and the children's feelings to suppress extreme emotions and evoke calmer feelings. It requires conscious effort, repeated practice, and a degree of self-surveillance and self-denial on the part of the students:

Sometimes I shout at the children, but that's just me... `Cause the nursery nurses don't always raise their voice as much as I do. I could probably just tone it down a little bit, still try and realise when I'm speaking loudly, try and quieten it down.

Children can wind you up! You'd say something to them, and then they're really, really cheeky. They've learned how to answer you back, so they're gonna do it. And they can wind you up, and suppose you've got a short temper? But saying that, I've got a short temper, but I don't let them try it.

As part of this process, the students' affection for small children and enjoyment of play also had to be limited, in order to take on a consciously developmental role:

Well, like, you're taught you can't be all lovey-dovey with the children. You've got to be quite stern if they've done something wrong.

That's what I've kind of learned, now... I teach, although I was playing with the children. If you went and just played with the kids and just not said `owt, like 'How many bricks are there?', they wouldn't really ever learn, would they? So you've just got to really think about it. Make `em count the bricks, and say how many bricks there are, and also play at the same time.

In these quotes, just as we saw for the care girls, there is a mismatch between the official, idealised version of the nursery nurse conveyed by the CIS – where harshness and detachment are deemed to be negative indicators – and the vocational culture expressed in the workplace, where some degree of harshness and detachment (though probably less than in care of the elderly) is essential to doing the job and coping with its emotional demands. By the start of their second year, students still agreed that working on their own and the children's emotions was a central aspect of their work. But they declared it was 'easy' for them now, explaining that they simply became a 'different person' when they entered into the workplace, reacting differently to provocation or distress than they would at college or at home.

The subtle processes of screening and discipline identified by Bates also underpin learning to labour in the nursery. Gender is crucial, and had already filtered students well before they applied for the course, despite some small success in the CACHE team's campaign to attract a few boys to the course. Girls had often looked after younger siblings and done part-time work baby-sitting or in various crèche or after-school club facilities. Some had also had brief work experience in care of the elderly, which they described with revulsion: they would probably have been 'bleeding, whining Minnies' among the care girls.

Distinctive locations within the working class also play an important role, although in a slightly different way for the nursery nurses. CACHE students were all working class, but slightly higher achievers than the care girls (many of whom had been rejected for childcare). Their parents were both keen and able to support them in full-time education rather than youth training. Like the care girls, they observed and judged each other in respect of subtle social differentiations. Nursery nurses are supposed to be 'nice girls', and one group rapidly defined themselves as 'nice', while dismissing other, more disadvantaged students as 'rough'. 'Nice' students described themselves as living at home with both parents, usually in the leafier suburbs of the city. They felt well cared

for, even spoiled, by their parents, and they knew that their college tutors cared for them too. But their talk about some of their fellow students reveal a process of subtle class distinction (Bourdieu, 1986). The following are typical examples of this ‘Othering’:

I come from a totally different background to some of these, because I mean, I don’t know what it’s like to not be without a mum or a dad, I live with both my parents. A lot of them are just one-parent families and it’s like half of the places where they live, I’ve never ever heard of, or I don’t even know where they are, but a lot of people say, ‘Oh, it’s really rough, it’s really rough’.

Some people come from different places and have different upbringings, and, you know... you just look at them and-, look at them first and think, ‘Ooh, you know {laughs}, don’t want to be friends with them’ {laughs}. If I met them on the street I wouldn’t talk to them... I don’t know what to say without sounding-, I seem really awful, but I don’t know, it’s just the mannerisms, and the way they talk and the-, like some of them-, I don’t like swearing and they swear.

Such differences of location within the working class were reflected in physical appearance, in clothing, make-up and jewellery, which are taken as signifiers of social status and morality in our society (Bourdieu, 1986, Skeggs, 2002). These formed part of the surveillance and discipline that operated in both college and placements. Students were allowed to wear what they pleased at college, and at first celebrated their release from school uniform. Joanne would comment on particular high-fashion items of clothing, sometimes admiringly, and then ask the group, ‘But would you wear that in placement?’ Gradually, students began to tone down their appearance, and noticed those who did not:

I don’t know if you’ve seen Chloë, she wears all the black make-up and the big baggy pants and stuff, but then to be professional you wouldn’t walk into a nursery looking like that, you’d scare the kids to death!

On one placement visit, after giving lots of positive feedback to an otherwise excellent student, Joanne ticked her off for wearing a revealing cropped T-shirt:

Joanne: Next time, though, I don’t want to see you wearing that. Not very nice for parents coming in, seeing acres of belly every time you lean across the table.

By the end of the first year, observations in college showed that almost all the remaining students had adopted a modest ‘uniform’ of tracksuit bottoms, T-shirts and hooded fleece tops in sober or pastel colours.

However, as the year progressed, a number of the girls Othered as ‘rough’ – including Gaby and Sonya – proved unable to develop emotional bonds with the group or with Joanne, despite her considerable patience with them and her efforts to get them to integrate. By the end of the year several of them had either left, or been excluded through the disciplinary process, including one student got into a fight outside college and was cautioned by police as a result. Those remaining were working hard to behave more collaboratively in class. In contrast, only one of the ‘nice’ group quit the course. She was the student who had complained that ‘Children can wind you up!’, and who was aware of her own short temper. She said that she had simply ‘had enough’ of working

with small children, and had been unable to motivate herself to do the written work required.

None of this is to imply any criticism of Joanne and her colleagues. They are deeply caring tutors, committed to principles of social justice and inclusion. It is social structures, vocational culture and institutional arrangements of VET that drive these processes, and elsewhere I have described how costly these can be for Joanne herself (Colley, 2002b). As Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest in their theory of learning as legitimate peripheral participation, communities of practice attract novices who are predisposed for particular types of work by 'characteristic biographies'. Predispositions structured by class and gender combine rather differently in the childcare site than for Bates' care girls, but the combination operates just as effectively to socialise and include those with suitable dispositions while excluding those who do not. Being female and *upper* working class, with happy experiences of being cared for by both parents, and a *lack* of 'hardening' experiences or 'toughness', appears to predispose girls to cope with the demands of the vocational culture in childcare in the appropriate manner. In addition, a particular type of individual disposition is necessary – one that is not short-tempered or liable to be 'wound up' by the tears and tantrums of small children.

Yet although these predispositions and dispositions are necessary, they are not in themselves sufficient. Learning is also a process of becoming, of transforming identity as one moves from peripheral to full membership of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Even the most 'suitable' girls have to adapt their dispositions further as they encounter the emotional challenges of the workplace. The pragmatic detachment required to cope with 'puke', 'pee' and punches is mitigated by the idealised image of the perfectly sensitive and gentle nursery nurse, and by the deeply caring culture created by college tutors. As Willis (1977) argued in relation to 'the lads', the appearance of choice still reflects a distinctive cultural pattern of social reproduction. But here it reproduces trajectories that suggest the category of 'working class kids' has to be differentiated, both along gender lines and according to different strata of the working class. Upper working class girls get slightly better working class, gender-stereotyped jobs – childcare rather than care of the elderly – but these jobs are still low-paid, still low-status, and they still get them by learning to labour upon their own feelings.

Learning to do emotional labour

Marxist feminists (e.g. Hochschild, 1983, James, 1989) have defined emotional labour, arguing that it is distinct from the traditionally assumed dualism of mental and manual labour. In emotional labour, the 'emotional style' of providing a service is part of that service itself, since 'in processing people, the product is a state of mind...[It] requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983: 6-7). This definition matches well the process the CACHE students described: inducing calmness or cheerfulness, and suppressing anger or embarrassment in themselves, at the same time trying to project a countenance that would also calm, comfort or discipline the small children in their care. Such work is most easily recognised when the individual senses a tension between what they feel and what they know they 'ought' to feel, as when students berated themselves for being 'lovey-dovey', shouting too much, or having a short temper. Yet emotional labour – along with the skills required to perform it – has remained for most part invisible, unsupported and unrewarded, as James (1989) noted in the quote that opens this paper. Bates underlines the point in her conclusion:

One of the advantages of the 'Care girls' study is that it renders transparent the social malleability of the concept of 'caring' and of the related skills. The economics of training, where it assumes the central issues are economic imperatives and skill shortages, tends to conceal the fact that job definitions and specifications of related skills are largely social constructs. In general terms, the provision, management and resourcing of institutional care for the elderly reflects the status of caring work, the status of the elderly and the status of women within a specific socio-historic context (Bates, 1991: 238).

The concept of emotional labour draws on both a theory of feelings and a theory of labour, and these are interconnected. A Marxist analysis of emotion argues that each society produces through its structures a dominant 'configuration of feelings' (Heller, 1979: 177). Although feelings are experienced as deeply natural and irrepressible, they are historically situated and socially regulated. In our society, this 'configuration' is dominated by modern, bourgeois sensibilities, illustrated by the fact that bodily functions, illness and death, and strong emotions themselves (like children's upset and crying, or elderly people's loneliness and fears) are experienced as unpleasant and/or distressing. The perception that such feelings are 'natural' is reinforced by the embodied character of non-habituated responses, such as retching when dealing with elderly people's incontinence and babies' nappies.

Feelings, then, are prescribed and learned as powerful norms. However, the expression of these norms differs not only for women and for men, but also between social classes, who inherit different 'worlds of feeling' (Heller, 1979: 178). They are determined by the specific tasks allocated to each social grouping according to the division of labour within the prevailing mode of production – and that division of labour is gendered under patriarchal capitalism:

The split in society between 'personal feelings' and 'economic production' was integrated with the sexual division of labour. Women were identified with emotional life, men with the struggle for existence (Zaretsky, 1976: 64, cited in James, 1989: 23).

These tasks are ascribed different values within a gendered hierarchy, and women's work is considered inferior to that of men (Francis, 2002, James, 1989). Class hierarchies also exist within this division of labour. So, for example, women are generally expected to nurture others, but *working class* women undertake the more difficult and demanding tasks of caring for other women's children and elders – in many cases, as well as having to care for their own. However important they are, these tasks are not highly valued in patriarchal capitalist society, and hence are low-paid and low-status. Similarly, particular forms of emotion – artistic sensibility, for example – are highly prized by the bourgeoisie itself, but the emotionality that is ascribed to women as part of their gender roles is regarded as inferior to male logic and rationality (Francis, 2002), and pathologised as a chaotic relationship to the external world (James, 1989). The process of moulding women's emotions for the caring service of others therefore demands both self-control and self-denial which may exact drastic costs of alienation in the longer term (Elias, 1978, Hochschild, 1983). While the nursery nursing trainees have not yet expressed such alienation, there is evidence that it may be experienced – quite painfully at times – by their tutor as she cares for them (see Colley, 2002b), and it is an important theme in other empirical studies of women's work (e.g. Colley, in press a,b, Hochschild, 1983, James, 1989).

In occupations like childcare and care of the elderly, the management of one's own and others' feelings is not a private adjunct to work, nor a sub-category of caring. It is a key feature of the workplace, a form of paid labour, or to be more accurate, of labour *power* – the capacity to labour, which can be ever more exploited for private profit (Marx, 1975). Not only does this change the nature of emotion as it is deployed, replacing its private use-value with public exchange-value, and thus turning it into a commodity and a source of alienation. This process is also facilitated by the occupational or vocational culture (Bates, 1994): a 'guiding ideology' of practice (James, 1989), 'vocational notion' (Frykholm and Nitzler, 1993), or 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1986), which organises the norms and expectations of a particular sphere of work. The 'international consensus' about quality childcare (Scarr, 1998, cited above) indicates one such vocational culture. This does not, however, mean that emotional labour is made any less damaging by the existence of this culture. It simply habituates those who perform it, as we saw the trainee nursery nurses becoming rapidly habituated within a year. In fact, this may be a prime example of the form of oppression that Bourdieu (2001) terms 'symbolic violence' – a form of violence which is not directly physical or visible, and may even become imperceptible to those who suffer it, but which assures their subordination nonetheless.

I have written throughout this paper about dispositions and predispositions. These are the twin aspects of another Bourdieuan concept – habitus (Bourdieu, 1986). Habitus encompasses both the individual aspects of the person that I have referred to as disposition (such as personal characteristics, feelings and choices), and collective aspects I have termed predisposition (for example, gender and class). In the latter respect, 'habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action' (Wacquant, 1992: 16). Reay offers a definition of gendered habitus that explains the deeply embodied nature of emotional labour:

...the concept of gendered habitus holds powerful structural influences within its frame. Gendered habitus includes a set of complex, diverse predispositions. It involves understandings of identity premised on familial legacy and early childhood socialization. As such it is primarily a dynamic concept, a rich interfacing of past and present, interiorized and permeating both body and psyche (Reay, in Grenfell and James, 1998: 141).

This helps us to see that learning to labour in caring work not only involves 'processing' the elderly (Bates, 1991) or small children. The primary 'raw material' on which working class girls labour in such jobs is *their own classed and gendered habitus* (cf. Colley, in press a,b). Emotional labour demands that they both mobilise existing predispositions and dispositions, but also work further on their own feelings and dispositions in learning to labour appropriately. Rikowski describes this as our 'predicament' in the post-Fordist workplace, which increasingly demands the display of dispositions demanded by employers, and thus 'incorporates a social drive to recast the "human" as human capital' (2002: 196). A Marxist feminist analysis suggests that this commodification of the most intimate parts of our personhood may always have been an aspect of women's labour.

The experiences of the care girls and the CACHE students also reveal the connection between habitus, the contextual field, and forms of capital. Habitus is durable, but Hochschild's (1983) analysis suggests that gendered habitus is more easily transformed, since part of women's oppression is their need – and their consequent ability – to adapt to

the emotional demands of others, given their lesser economic, social and cultural capital. From their family backgrounds and previous experiences of the home, education and work, 'suitable' girls bring essential cultural, social and emotional resources to the specific sector of the labour market they will enter. The field demands that these resources are further worked upon and developed. But at the same time, it only allows these resources to count as 'capital' – that is to circulate, accumulate and be exchanged for other forms of capital – within highly restricted parameters (cf. Bates, 1994). These boundaries confine the girls to low-paid, low-status, female working class jobs.

The CACHE Diploma site, therefore, can indeed be seen as a 'transforming learning culture', in the transitive sense. As students enter the site, it takes them from an initial 'turning point' of imposed post-16 transition into an extended and pervasive 'routine' within VET (cf. Hodkinson *et al*, 1996). That routine both confirms their classed and gendered positions and predispositions, but also contributes, through students' own positioning, to a socially reproductive transformation of their dispositions. As we have suggested elsewhere (Colley *et al*, 2002), however, any attempt at transforming that learning culture itself must take into account – and is likely to be limited by – the weight of the related vocational culture, and its connection with deep-rooted class and gender oppression in our society.

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