

**Stirring The Hornet's Nest: Women's Citizenship and
Childcare in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

of

Rhodes University

by

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February 2006

Abstract

It is a widely acknowledged fact that women's access to the full rights of citizenship in the liberal state is restricted because of their unequal responsibility for childcare. The South African state, however, despite its theoretical commitment to gender equality, has failed substantially to engage with the issue of childcare and women's citizenship. This is problematic because in failing to envisage a role for itself in supporting women with their responsibility for childcare, the state has not only neglected its Constitutional commitments to gender equality, but it has also failed to realise the benefits that could potentially accrue to children if women's access to economic citizenship is not hampered by childcare. Recognising this problem, this thesis attempts to engender some debate as to how the South African state could feasibly correct this failure. In doing so, it uses feminist political theory as a basis and takes a critical view of the two childcare policies that have dominated the debate over women's citizenship and childcare in Western liberal democracies – socialised care and the neofamilialist model. In concluding it attempts to provide an idea of what feasible, state-based childcare policies could look like in present-day South Africa.

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Acknowledgments

To my supervisor, Professor Louise Vincent, my thanks for guiding me through this process and for all the knowledge you have imparted over the last two years.

To my family, Helen, Joe and Duncan, thank you for all your love and support.

Chapter 1: Introduction

It is vitally important that all structures of government, including the president himself, should understand fully: that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us must take this on board, that the objectives of Reconstruction and Development will not have been realised unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of the women in our country has radically changed for the better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all spheres of life as equals with any other member of society.

(President Nelson Mandela, Inaugural Speech, April 1994, cited in Lumphondwana and Ferguson, 2001)

Since 1994, and South Africa's move towards liberal democracy, the realisation that women's empowerment and emancipation is a vital component of any functional 'free' society has, theoretically, been a major concern of the South African Government. It has entrenched gender equality, along with racial equality, in the Constitution and has attempted to comply with this commitment through wide-ranging legislative provisions relating to employment, customary law, child maintenance, gender discrimination in the public services and reproductive rights. In some respects this has been fruitful – women now make up 49 percent of the National Members of Parliament (van Noort, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 8 August, 2005) and a female Deputy President has recently been inaugurated. But these are, however, an elite few. For the vast majority of women in this country, the theoretical commitment to gender equality has largely remained just that – theoretical. In an already unequal society that sees the top five percent of the population consume more than the bottom 85 percent put together (Bond, 2000), women are still the most unequal of all. In particular women are poorer, have less access to economic opportunities, are proportionately less educated and earn lower salaries than men (Baden *et al.*, 1998; Budlender, 2002).

While there are, perhaps, many different and complex reasons for this, this thesis argues that one major underlying cause of women's continued marginalisation is the lack of a real commitment by the government to the expanded notion of citizenship that is, according to Goldblatt (2004), implicit within the Constitution, and, in particular, with how the notion of substantive gender equality needs to *practically* interact with this if

women are to gain access to the rights of social citizenship. Practically is the key word here, because in terms of the theoretical commitments to gender equality, as will be shown in the following section, the South African government is almost faultless. Unfortunately this is not the case in terms of its policies that have a direct impact on the lives of women, nor in its allocation of public resources (Taylor, 1997). Before elaborating on this argument, however, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by an 'expanded notion of citizenship,' how this links to gender equality, and how the two have been theoretically conceptualised in South Africa.

The term 'expanded' citizenship (also known as social citizenship) comes from T. H. Marshall (1965), who saw the need, post-World War II, for a definition of citizenship that was expanded to include not only the traditional civil and political rights, but also socio-economic rights. Marshall (1965) claimed that socio-economic need prevented many people from being able to participate as full civil and political citizens, which meant that large swathes of national populations were effectively denied their rights to citizenship. Marshall (1965) argued, therefore, that if governments wished to include all people in a national community of interest, it was necessary to ensure that socio-economic rights (particularly welfare rights) were firmly entrenched in the definition of citizenship, thereby ensuring that those previously disadvantaged were able to participate fully in civil and political life.

Marshall's idea of social citizenship became one of the foundations of the Keynesian welfare state, but it has been widely criticised by feminists who argue that Marshall's failure to incorporate any form of gendered analysis into his theories has meant that women have largely been denied access to the full rights of social citizenship (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994; Goldblatt, 2004). Feminists argue that the subordination of women is deeply, and often invisibly, ingrained into the social fabric – that the very basis of normative social structures such as, for example, the family, rely on women's oppression and are themselves barriers to women's access to full socio-economic rights. Feminists argue that without specific legislation and policies which recognise and help them overcome these barriers, women – who in many cases, are most at risk in terms of the

poverty and marginalisation that Marshall sought to address – will always be second-class citizens.

In South Africa, Goldblatt (2004) has argued that despite the fact that the courts have so far not given much definition to the right of citizenship, the inclusion of socio-economic rights in the Constitution, as well as the context within which these rights were framed (particularly, the need to extend rights to those previously denied them under apartheid, as well as the need to address high levels of poverty and inequality) – suggests that the drafters had in mind an expanded definition of citizenship. According to Goldblatt (2004: 129), Constitutional references to the entitlement of citizens to “rights, benefits and privileges,” (Act 108 of 1996, Section 3(2)(a)) means that the Constitution “envisages a state that attempts to provide for its citizens to alleviate poverty and to improve people’s lives” – in other words that the citizens of South Africa, due to the extreme inequities of the past, should be afforded social, as well as civil and political rights. More importantly for this thesis, however, there is also a Constitutional commitment to substantive (as opposed to formal) equality for women, which means that the state is obliged to ensure that women “are in a position to take advantage of opportunity when it is available” (Freeman cited in Van Zyl, 1997: 52). This commitment therefore recognises the feminist critique elaborated on above – that the state needs to put in place specific legislation and policies which allow women to overcome the structural barriers that impede their access to the “rights, benefits and privileges” of citizenship.

Theoretically, then, there is a sophisticated understanding by the South African state that expanded notions of citizenship, which are necessary in order to allow those previously disadvantaged access to full citizenship, need to interact with substantive commitments to gender equality if this expanded notion of citizenship is to include women. As alluded to earlier, however, the problem arises with the disjuncture between this understanding and the formulation of policies that should be able to give practical effect to these commitments. In particular one would assume from this theoretical reading, that the issue of care would have been cogently addressed by state policies attempting to engage with the sexual division of labour. After all, feminists have long argued that women’s familial

responsibility for care (of children, of the elderly and of the sick) is one of the major impediments to their full inclusion as political, civil and social citizens. But this has not been the case. Rather, the *White Paper for Social Welfare (WPSW)* (1996), which is, according to Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, (2003), one of the more important documents in terms of the state's articulation of the way in which practical substance is to be given to the Constitutional obligations to social citizenship rights and the access thereof, fails, in any meaningful way, to question the gendered division of care responsibilities (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003). Instead, the document consists of vague and contradictory statements, which reflect the theoretical realisations mentioned above, but which also demonstrate the fact that the government is unwilling to give concrete substance to these commitments (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003). So, for example, the *WPSW* acknowledges that care responsibilities hamper the ability of women to access employment opportunities, and asserts that the facilitation of conditions which allow women to “be fully integrated into the economy” is a national priority (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003: 309). Throughout the same document, however, there is an insistence on women's role as primary care-givers, which is positioned against a background of very vague articulations of how the state is to help women combine these caring roles with their need to be “fully integrated into the economy” (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003). In a much clearer manner, however, the *WPSW* places great emphasis on ‘self-reliance’ – a notion which is extremely problematic in terms of gender equality arguments (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003). In order to gain an understanding of why this is so, it is first necessary to understand some of the more general implications of the term ‘self-reliance’ when used in this context.

‘Self-reliance’ is the undisputed maxim of the neo-liberal social and economic policies that were adopted in South Africa through the macro economic visions articulated in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR). Neo-liberalism emphasises the importance of state withdrawal from welfare functions – which it claims both limits individual freedom (by allowing the state to have too much control over resources) and “promotes passivity among the poor, without actually improving their life chances” (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 356). This, advocates of neo-liberalism claim, results in a “culture of dependency,” where the poor are able to live off the state, whilst

contributing little in return. Neo-liberalism's emphasis, therefore, has been on cutting back welfare spending and promoting 'self-reliance' through participation in market-related employment as a way in which to "get the disadvantaged back on their feet" (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 337). Important to note in this is that "when the New Right talks about self-reliance, the boundaries of the 'self' include the family – it is families that should be self-reliant" (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 358). This is based on the theoretical position that it is the family, as the basic unit of liberal society that should provide what the 'roll-back' state cannot or will not provide. It is the family, therefore, which must supply its members with emotional, physical and most importantly, financial support. In other words, it is the family which must assume full responsibility for the care of its members. Furthermore, state intervention in the affairs of the family is regarded as undesirable because it is representative of state interference in private affairs, which, neo-liberals claim, runs counter to the notion of unlimited individual freedoms that the liberal state is meant to protect (King, 1987). Due to the way families have been structured by liberal society, however, where it is women who are positioned as primary carers in their capacity as 'mothers,' 'self-reliance' is effectively "code for the view that...women should look after the household and care for the elderly, the sick and the young" (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 358).

In emphasising familial 'self-reliance,' therefore, the *WPSW* conforms to this neo-liberal view of the role of women, the family and its relationship to the state. There are, of course, two obvious contradictions here – both of which have contributed to the disjuncture between theory and practice highlighted earlier, and both of which have left women struggling as second-class citizens eleven years into democracy. Firstly, by failing to question the gendered responsibility for care, and then emphasising 'self-reliance,' it becomes unambiguously clear that important state documents like the *WPSW* effectively take it for granted, and even see it as desirable, that women will continue to assume the (unpaid) responsibility for care, and will therefore continue, as Marxist feminists have long argued, to cushion the neo-liberal state from having to financially provide for the social reproduction of its labour. Thus, it can be argued, the sentiments contained within the *WPSW* directly contradict the governments own commitment to

gender equality, and fail to give concrete substance to any notion of citizenship which seeks to include women.

Secondly, as King (1987: 3) has argued, neo-liberalism has directly counteracted “the widening of citizenship rights and the ending of inequality” by insisting on active economic participation as a prerequisite to the entitlements of citizenship. The result has been that on the one hand, the South African state has included socio-economic rights in the Constitution, which is consistent with the realisation that access to social citizenship was necessary in order to address the inequities of the past – that people are poor, uneducated, and facing high unemployment, and that it is therefore the duty of the state to provide assistance. On the other hand, it has adopted an economic standpoint which, in theory and practice, negates this realisation, and which only extends social citizenship rights to those (other than the very old or very young) who are able to find employment, and are therefore largely able to support themselves (Nattrass and Seekings, 1997). While this is, of course, detrimental to all those who suffer from a lack of access to economic and social opportunities, it is women who suffer the most. Not only are they less able to find employment due to lower levels of education or marketable skills, but because of the government’s failure to relieve, or even address, their familial care responsibilities, women continue to face even greater hurdles in terms of accessing economic opportunities – which means, essentially, that women will continue to remain in their marginal socio-economic position.

Also problematic is that it is not only women who suffer. A society which marginalizes women is a society that inevitably marginalizes all those for whom women care. In particular, as Williams (2000) has argued, it is children who tend to suffer the most damaging effects. “Children suffer in a system that first allocates children’s care to women and then marginalizes the women who do it, thereby undercutting their power to stand up for children’s needs” (Williams, 2000: 57). Children need care in order to thrive; women, by-and-large, perform this function and, because of the structuring of liberal society, are socio-economically marginalized for doing so. The inevitable consequence of this is that the quality of care that children receive is compromised. “The evidence from a

whole generation of research demonstrates that the quality of parents' behaviour as caregivers and teachers makes a difference in the development of infants and young children" (Amoateng *et al.*, 2004). The inevitable outcome of compromising women's rights, therefore, is a society that also compromises the future of its children.

The urgent need to address the marginal position of children in society has been recognised by the government, however. It has instituted a number of policies and programmes aimed at the socio-economic welfare of children; it has just published the new Children's Bill, which comprehensively lays out a number of protections for children; it has entrenched specific socio-economic rights for children in the Constitution; it provides direct cash interventions on behalf of children such as the Child Support Grant (CSG); it has ratified two major international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child – and has launched and re-launched a National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa (NPA) as "an instrument for ensuring that poor children are 'put first' in policy, government budgets and service delivery" (Cassiem *et al.*, 2000: vii). What has clearly not been recognised, however, is that the marginalisation of women and the marginalisation of children are interrelated – that no matter how much money is thrown at child related initiatives, if the subordination of women – who perform the vast majority of physical childcare work – is not simultaneously addressed, children will continue to be socially, economically and developmentally challenged.

This thesis therefore argues that it is imperative that government begin the process of practically engaging with its theoretical commitments to substantive gender equality and social citizenship and foregrounds the issue of childcare – particularly the care of children under school-going age – as one of the more important aspects of what this engagement should centre around. While it is one thing to fail to deal with social marginalisation in the present, it is another thing entirely to perpetuate this cycle of poverty and exploitation into the future. This thesis is, therefore, not only about the liberation of South Africa's women, it is also about trying to conceptualise the ways in

which we can better provide for South Africa's children – the two, it is argued, are intimately linked.

In order to address the position of children in South African society, it has been argued above, it is first necessary to address the position of South African women. In doing so it is vital that we attempt to conceptualise a role for the state in facilitating an environment where the responsibility for childcare does not automatically mean that women are unable to access their full citizenship rights – a society, in other words, that does not set in opposition the rights of women and the rights of their children. How we are able to do this, however, largely depends on the assumptions that are made about the role of women in both the family as well as wider society, about the needs of children in terms of care – and therefore about what a child essentially 'is' – and about how best the state can facilitate an environment which does not compromise the rights of either women or children. This thesis hopes to examine these questions in light of the contribution of feminist political theory, which has attempted to engage with these questions in both theoretical and practical terms.

Feminist political theory is, however, itself split between how best to address these questions. This dispute has taken the form of the 'difference' versus 'equality' debate that has more generally permeated recent citizenship theory (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). Essentially, the dispute is between those who argue that there should be public recognition of an ethic of care that has traditionally been associated with women in the private sphere and those who argue that women should be enabled to "participate as equals in the public sphere" (Lister, 1997: 93). In practical terms, the advocates of 'difference' argue that public support should be given to women in their role as carers – that caring is an important part of social life that should be valorised, not marginalized. If women lack access to rights because of their caring roles, they should be compensated by the state to make up for that. The advocates of 'equality,' on the other hand, argue that childcare needs to be made a public responsibility so that women can access their full rights of citizenship. In other words, that childcare be removed from the sphere of

women's responsibility and constructed in a gender-neutral manner – their emphasis, therefore, has been on the provision of state-based childcare programmes.

The argument is, therefore, essentially one between whether socially constructed notions of family life, which place women at the centre of childcare responsibilities, need to be broken down, or given more support – whether the physical act of childcare should continue to be considered a 'private,' female activity, or whether it should be considered a gender-neutral social responsibility. In other words, these are fundamental deliberations regarding the role of women in, as well as the nature of, liberal society. In order to deliberate on these questions, therefore, it is first necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the way in which liberal society has defined women, defined children, how it has defined the role of women in relation to children, and how this has left women in the marginalized position they now occupy. In this it is important that both of the definitions of children and of women are elaborated on because it is only once we gain an understanding of how liberal society has defined the child and its needs, that we can understand how and why it has positioned women in the way it has. Chapter 1 will, therefore, be devoted to the historical development, in Western political thought, of modern conceptions of 'the child,' 'the mother,' and the relationship between the two. It will then move onto to a more detailed explanation of why feminists have argued that the responsibility for care is such a central aspect of women's exclusion from citizenship. This discussion will also lay the theoretical foundations for the feminist critiques that were briefly alluded to earlier.

Chapter 2 will then attempt to contextualise the thesis with a look at the way in which the lack of state intervention in the affairs of the family has affected South African women in terms of access to economic opportunities. It will also add a descriptive element by examining the way in which childcare has so far been dealt with by South African women. In particular, it will attempt to show how unsatisfactory these current arrangements are for both women and children, and will thereby demonstrate the need for some form of state intervention. Chapters 3 and 4 will then attempt to engage with the question of how the state could envisage a role for itself in terms of childcare provisions,

by considering, in turn, the policies associated with each side of the feminist debate. Chapter 3 will examine the argument of the equality feminists for the provision of state-funded socialised care and will attempt to critically engage with how efficient a solution this is in South Africa. Chapter 4 will similarly examine the argument of the difference feminists and their 'neo-familialist' (Mahon, 2002) model of state support. In both of these chapters examples from European welfare states will be drawn on to provide an illustration of the way in which 'feminist citizenship' has been conceptualised on an international level. In the final chapter it will be argued that polarising the debate in this manner is unhelpful and also provides few solutions that can realistically be given practical effect in South Africa. This chapter will, therefore, seek to define a middle path and suggest some workable policies that have the potential to directly impact on the lives of South African women and children for the better.

Chapter 2

Within Western thought what has been considered to be best for children and the role of women in providing what is best, is the subject, historically, of some considerable debate. This is because the care and effective management of children has always been a central component of the problem of social order, which “in different ways, at different times and by many different routes...has been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the state” (Rose, 1990: 121). Children, as the adults of the future society, are an important resource – how they are socialised will determine the political landscape of future generations. However, as Jenks (1996: 12) has argued, children are also perceived as a political threat to society in two important ways. Firstly, they do not yield easily to explanation by adult social theory – they are different from adults in many ways, yet they cannot be understood as a different species nor as pathological entities – they are perhaps, therefore, the hardest humans to understand. Secondly, and most importantly, as the society of the future, that ‘difference’ – that is so little understood – can pose a substantial threat to the social status quo if it is not neutralised through rigorous socialisation processes (Jenks, 1996).

Caring for children is in many ways the primary mode of socialisation and therefore the primary mode of diffusing the potential threat that children pose – those who care for children and how they care for them will play a large role in determining the future goals, aspirations and subjectivity of that child – the citizen of tomorrow. It becomes clear, then, why the care of children – who it is done by and how it is done – has assumed such great political significance and it is not therefore surprising that references to the family, its composition and its power structures have been articulated in political philosophies from even before the Greeks and Christians. Such references can be found right back to the ancient Indian texts – the Vedas, Aryas, Brahmanas and Sutras (Badinter, 1981).

The dominant Western paradigm that has governed the dynamics of the family is one that has placed men at its head (as financial providers), children at its centre, and women as its source of emotional and physical support. This ‘nuclear family’ structure has come to

form the social core, at least ideally, of liberal, capitalist society. It is the result of a particular definition of women and children which constructs children as innocents in need of care that is both loving and protective, and women, who are constructed as ‘naturally’ connected to their children on a deep emotional and spiritual level, as best able to provide that love and protection (Badinter, 1981). Women have therefore been positioned as those solely responsible for the care of children. This means, then, that it is women who have been tasked with the responsibility for diffusing the danger that children pose to the future – a responsibility which, due to its great importance (particularly in a society which relies so heavily on individual socialisation as a disciplinary technique – see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1975), has seen women’s role as mothers gain prominence over any other aspect of their identity. The particular structure of the nuclear family, therefore, is not only indicative of the political value that has been placed on the ‘correct’ socialisation of children, but it is also representative of the particular definition of ‘woman’ that this society has sought to entrench and has come to rely on for the reproduction of its ‘docile’ future society – that of ‘woman’ as ‘mother.’

The problem is, as mentioned in the introduction, that the association these constructions has formed between women and the family has also resulted in the exclusion of women from the rights, benefits and protections that are supposedly offered by liberal society. Motherhood, in other words, has been central to the exclusion of women from citizenship. This is, of course, a central point to elaborate on and it will therefore be discussed in greater depth in this chapter. At this point, however, it is only necessary to understand that the position of women within liberal society is a paradoxical one. On the one hand women’s childcare work, which forms the fundamental basis of social reproduction, is an exceedingly important part of liberal society. On the other hand, the responsibility for this is a direct cause of women’s exclusion from the very society that they support through this work. How liberal society, in light of its egalitarian rhetoric, has managed to justify this exclusion will also form part of this chapter – largely because in discussing this, greater insight is gained in terms of the way in which this society has defined women, defined children and defined the relationship between them – an

understanding of which is essential if the feminist critiques of it that are to come later are to be fully comprehended.

Before moving on to this, however, this chapter will begin with an historical look at the conceptions of motherhood and childhood that have dominated Western political thought, up until the period when the modern conception of the family was first articulated by the French philosopher of social contract – Jean-Jacques Rousseau – in 1762. This forms an important part of the thesis, not only because it acts as a contextual background to the modern conceptions of motherhood and childhood, but because it also allows for a recognition that the ‘natural’ relationship between women and children that modern society has emphasised, has not always existed in this form. This is an important point to elaborate on because in doing so it becomes clear that the roles assigned to women, children, and the family are the product of a particular social and political strategy – and that, therefore, there are other ways in which we can begin to conceptualise these role(s). Without this understanding it is impossible to continue with a thesis that is ultimately seeking to question, and possibly even re-define, the way in which modern, liberal society has positioned women in relation to children and the family.

In doing so, as was stated in the introductory chapter, it is necessary to look at the definitions of *both* women and children, because it is only when we understand how children – and their needs – have been defined, that we can understand how and why societies have positioned women as they have. Thus, the following section will attempt to give an overview of changing historical conceptions of both women and children. The chapter will then move onto a discussion of the definitions of women and children after 1760, when the social conditions necessary for the propagation of liberal, capitalist society were laid. This will allow for a discussion of how liberal society has used these definitions to justify the exclusion of women from the rights of citizenship, which will form the theoretical basis for a discussion of the feminist critiques of both liberal citizenship and the structure of the nuclear family that were alluded to briefly in the introductory chapter.

Women, Children and Childcare in Western Political Philosophy Up To 1760

In attempting to reveal the socially constructed nature of the relationship between women and children, it is particularly important to note that before 1760, this relationship, that has come to be portrayed as both intense and ‘natural’ by modern society – and which constructs the child as an innocent in need of its mother’s protection and the mother as a ‘natural’ nurturer – has not always enjoyed the status it is given today (Aries, 1973; Badinter, 1981; Somerville, 1982). Early Western thought in particular, while recognising that women and children were physically connected through the biological processes of conception, pregnancy, birth and lactation, did not necessarily view women as having any major role to play in the process of childrearing nor as having any special emotional or spiritual connection to the children they bore. The classical philosophies of the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle, are particularly good examples of this thinking.

In his revolutionary work *The Republic*, for example, Plato argued that children should not be reared by their mothers at all and stated that “no parent should know his child, or child his parent” (*The Republic*, VI (2): 214). Instead, Plato argued, children should be cared for in communal nurseries where women would be able to use their breast milk to feed the infants, but where every precaution was taken to prevent mothers from recognising their own children. “Nurses and attendants” would carry out the bulk of the rest of the care work, and would also ensure “that mothers do not suckle children for more than a reasonable length of time” – thereby ensuring that women did not form an attachment to any one particular child (*The Republic*, VI (2): 216).

This communal take on the child-rearing was inspired by Plato’s more general desire to envisage a perfect ‘republic,’ where the “interest of the state or society counts for everything, that of the individual for nothing” (Lee, 1955: 201). Plato argued that in this perfect society there was no room for the individual family, because this both divided people’s loyalties and made them selfish and inconsiderate to those outside of their own family units. Families, in other words, created individuals who were more interested in themselves than in the greater good. If, however, all children grew up in a society in which any person they met “could be related to him as brother, or sister, father or

mother, son or daughter, grandparent, or grandchild” (*The Republic*, VI (2): 220), this would engender a form of familial affection amongst all members of that society. In turn, Plato argued, this would allow for a greater communal spirit where the interests of the state really did come before the interests of the individual.

Aristotle, Plato’s protégé, did not particularly agree with these sentiments – he argued that Plato’s vision of completely communal childcare and the breakdown of the family unit were neither possible nor desirable. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, argued that parents would always be able to recognise their children through physical characteristics – “nor is there any way of preventing brothers and children and fathers and mothers from sometimes recognising one another; for children are born like their parents, and they will necessarily be finding indications of their relationship to one another” (*Politics*, II (3): 58). He also argued that breaking the familial bonds between close family members would not result in a greater communal spirit, but would rather result in the very opposite – a society where no person was beholden to any other, and so defended the necessity of the family in terms of social cohesion:

...in a state having women and children common, love will be watery; and the father will certainly not say ‘my son,’ or the son ‘my father.’ As a little sweet wine mingled with a great deal of water is imperceptible in the mixture, so, in this sort of community, the idea of relationship which is based upon these names will be lost; there is no reason why the so-called father should care about the son, or the son about the father, or brothers about one another. Of the two qualities which chiefly inspire regard and affection – that a thing is your own and that you love it – neither can exist in such a state as this (*Politics*, II (4): 60).

Despite this disagreement, however, Aristotle still did not view women as having any major role to play in the process of childrearing, other than ensuring the physical health of the child during pregnancy. As Okin (1979: 82) has commented, Aristotle’s implicit assumption throughout *Politics*, is that women act only “as a passive receptacle for the new life,” whereas it is men who should take the active role in at least the mental development of the child. Okin (1979: 82) remarks that

In keeping with his [Aristotle’s] general theory of reproduction, since the mother provides only the matter for the child and the father its rational soul, it is only the father’s mental prime that is taken into

account, and while the mother is advised to exercise and eat well while pregnant, since the growing foetus draws on her body, her mind should be kept idle, in order that more of her strength be preserved for the child's growth. Since the child is in no way perceived as drawing on the mother's mind, the development of her mind is quite needless.

There are two underlying assumptions that are brought forward, one implicitly and one explicitly, in this quotation, both of which form the basis of Plato and Aristotle's rejection of mother-care. The first is an (implicit) assumption related to the nature of the child and its role in society. Children, to Plato and Aristotle, were a very important resource of the state – they were considered to be the future citizens of the perfect 'Republic.' At the same time, however, children were also considered to be 'not quite human' (Kennedy, 1999). In particular, they lacked the ability to reason and they therefore also lacked the ability to moderate their physical desires (*The Republic*, V (4): 179; *Politics*, VII (15): 293) – which to Plato and Aristotle were the fundamental characteristics of not only the good and virtuous citizen, but also of the individual who could be considered fully human (*The Republic*, V (4): 179; *Politics*, VII (14): 288). Thus the care of children – and their correct socialisation – was considered to be of the utmost importance – these non-human 'monsters' needed to be moulded into the future, reason-governed citizens that were necessary for the continuation of the state.

This leads into the second assumption – one which is made explicit by Okin (1979) and which relates to the nature and role of women in society. Women, it was assumed by Plato and Aristotle, were inferior to men because they were considered to be naturally incapable of reason. Plato (*The Republic*, V (4): 179) likened women to slaves (who were also not considered as human) and children in stating "the greatest variety of desires and pleasures and pains is generally to be found in children, women and slaves, and in the less reputable majority of so-called free men." Aristotle considered women to have some "deliberative faculty", but due to their natural inferiority, this lacked "authority" (*Politics*, I (13): 51). Women, then, while obviously necessary in terms of giving birth to children, were not at all suitable in terms of the very important task of socialising them, because they themselves were devoid of the characteristics that this process was supposed to

engender in children. The socialisation of children, it was therefore implied, was best left either to men or to the institutions of the state.

This lack of any emphasis on the bonds between mother and child, although undergoing a distinct ideological shift, was also conspicuous in Christian political and social thought – which influenced and dominated Western ideas on childhood (in particular) from the Middle Ages right up until the latter half of the 17th century (Aries, 1973; Badinter, 1981). An important contrast exists here between the early Christian conception of the child and the modern conception and before moving on to a discussion of how women and children were positioned in relationship to one another at this stage, it is first necessary to briefly expand on the underlying conception of the child that contributed to the nature of this relationship.

Under its early Roman influence, despite the original doctrine which placed much value on children, Christian thought tended to portray children as innately evil, rather than as innately innocent (Badinter, 1981). The image of the child from the Christian philosophy of St. Augustine, for example, was of a “monster born tainted by Adam’s defiance” (Somerville, 1982: 54). While this understanding of the child may have been somewhat congruent with Plato and Aristotle, in that the child was still considered as ‘not quite human,’ the rationale behind it was different. Instead of being considered a future resource of the state and therefore as a human-in-waiting, children, in early Christian thought, were considered as Satan’s representatives on earth. As the embodiment of ‘original sin’ – humanity’s fallen state – they were therefore something to be feared and rigorously controlled. Here the state of childhood was considered not as a process of ‘becoming’ – as a state which has potential, but rather as something that should, for the sake of humanity, be completely discarded as soon as possible (Badinter, 1981).

The ‘care’ of children at this stage was, therefore, heavily influenced by strict church doctrine and involved the attempted eradication of anything that might be considered a childish (and therefore evil) desire – often through harsh punishments and beatings (Badinter, 1981). The conception of appropriate childrearing, then, was very different

from its modern counterpart – children were considered as evil rather than innocent and the care that they were considered to need did not involve love and nurturance, but was centred rather on what today would probably be considered physical abuse.

Due in part to this complete devaluation of childhood and anything ‘childish’ that was the legacy of St. Augustine it is unsurprising that, as several authors have commented (Aries, 1973; Badinter, 1981), women during this time did not actually wish to involve themselves, in any significant way, in the rearing of their children. To have children in fact appeared to have been considered more of a burden than anything else. According to Aries (1973: 37), for example:

As late as the seventeenth century...we have a neighbour, standing at the bedside of a woman who has just given birth, the mother to five ‘little brats’, and calming her fears with these words: Before they are old enough to bother you, you will have lost half of them, or perhaps all of them.

As Badinter (1981) has pointed out, however, it was not only St. Augustine’s legacy that contributed to this lack of maternal affection. On a more practical level it was also because women simply did not have the time to invest in their children. According to Badinter (1981) women from all social strata (except the very wealthy and the aristocracy) were heavily involved in the maintenance of their household-based economies, which severely restricted the time that they could afford to give to their children. “Wives whose husbands were tradesmen were directly involved in their husband’s work...wives of silk workers...worked at the loom at their husband’s side. For such enterprises to be even marginally profitable, the repeated interruptions necessitated by the care of children were not possible” (Badinter, 1981: 48). As a consequence, children, at least until they were old enough to contribute to the household economy themselves, were handed over to wet-nurses who would take on the responsibility for breastfeeding and other child care tasks (Badinter, 1981). These were usually much poorer women – indicating how unimportant this task was deemed to be.

However, as Badinter (1981) moves on to argue, even very wealthy women did not, at this stage, involve themselves overly in the care of their children and they were also users

of wet-nurses. For these women, this was not a survival-related strategy – they were financially secure enough not to have to worry about earning a living. Rather, their use of wet-nurses was a result of the social stigma that was attached to breastfeeding and caring for one’s own child – which were considered both unfashionable and a nuisance which restricted the ability of women to move freely in and around their social circles (Badinter, 1981). Thus, as Badinter (1981) argues, it becomes clear that ‘motherly love,’ did not at this time, nor had it since the time of the Greeks, exist in any form that would be recognisable today. The fact that it was not only time-constraints and traditional values (which influenced the aristocracy less than the lower social classes) that prevented women from caring for their children, she argues, is indicative of the general lack, socially, of any conception of a direct spiritual and emotional link between women and their children (Badinter, 1981). This was all to change, however, with the arrival of the late eighteenth century, and in particular, the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s treatise on the child and its care and education – *Emile* – in 1762.

Women, Children and Childcare After 1760: Towards the Familialisation of Care

After 1760, as Badinter (1981) has argued, an important ideological shift, inextricably entwined with the rise of capitalism and its attendant liberal philosophy, occurred in terms of both how the child was conceived of and how it was to be cared for. With the rise of capitalism – and its necessary focus on the social reproduction of its waged labour – the new ‘science’ of demography also rose to prominence (Badinter, 1981). Population numbers became an important indicator of the strength of the nation – strength was in numbers – especially for those European countries such as Britain and France, whose colonial capitalist economies required substantial settler populations. As a consequence, the focus on children as a future resource – which had characterised Plato and Aristotle’s thinking, but which had been thoroughly discarded by early Christian theology – was intensified with renewed vigour. The child was no longer considered to be a “short term burden,” but rather a “long term productive force,” and a “profitable investment for the state” (Badinter, 1981: 130). Once again, then, the idea of the child as the citizen-of-the-future came to prominence and whereas children had been treated with much neglect in

the centuries since Aristotle and Plato, social engineers began to re-examine the treatment of children and devise new ways in which to care for them.

There were, however, differences between the Greek values regarding the ‘citizens of the future’ and this newer vision. This was due to the dual influence of a Christianity set free from its harsh Roman influence, and the new philosophy of ‘equality’ that came to characterise the thinking of the social contract philosophers in particular (Aries, 1967; Sommerville, 1982; Badinter, 1981). Rousseau’s 1762 treatise on the care of children represented both of these influences. Firstly, Rousseau posited the child not as the embodiment of original sin, but rather as the embodiment of original innocence, in his immortal line: “The Author of Nature makes all things good, man meddles with them and they become evil” (Rousseau, 1911 (1762): 5). Untainted by the evils of society, the protection of that childlike innocence, until the child was strong enough to care for itself in the harsh public world, was of paramount importance to Rousseau. In essence, Rousseau’s thinking was representative of a new version of Christianity in which the threat of fire and brimstone had been replaced with a new conception of ‘love’ and happiness – a state of being which was constructed as stemming from the mutual respect of the husband and wife, and the care of the child (Badinter, 1981). This was a conception of the family – as the locus of love and as “primarily and emotional rather than economic unit” (Williams, 2000: 21) – that was to take root in Western philosophy from this point onwards. Thus we see Hegel in the early 19th century claim as an uncontested fact that “...the family as the immediate substantiality of mind, is specifically characterised by love” (*The Philosophy of Right*, Part 3i)

The second development, as stated earlier, was the new egalitarian spirit of the Enlightenment that began to take hold at this time (Badinter, 1981: 140). This mode of thought challenged the Aristotelian conception of the father as the owner of the child by right, rather power “now found its justification in the weakness of the child.” Children, therefore, were no longer considered to be the subjects of the father – rather they were now (male children, at least) considered as future ‘equals.’ The role of the father, therefore, was to nurture the child towards that equality, rather than treat the child as a

social inferior. As a consequence of both this and the aforesaid emphasis on the need to protect childlike innocence, the child became the new centre of the family – the goal of the family was to “make out of a temporarily weak and dependent being and autonomous person who is the equal of his parents” (Badinter, 1981: 143). According to John Locke, for example, parents – who were the custodians of children for God – had a ‘natural’ duty to “preserve, nourish, and educate the Children they had begotten” (Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, sec. 56, cited in Matthews, 2003). Thus, the child, as Walkerdine (1990) would have it, had become ‘omnipotent’ and all important. Once again this is exemplified by Hegel who suggests that the marriage between a man and a woman can only find its true meaning in the children that result from the union – the care of children therefore begins to take on existential qualities – meaning in life comes from the successful rearing of children. As Hegel (*The Philosophy of Right*, Part 3i) put it:

In substance marriage is a unity, though only a unity of inwardness or disposition; in outward existence, however, the unity is sundered in the two parties. It is only in the children that the unity itself exists externally, objectively, and explicitly as a unity, because the parents love the children as their love, as the embodiment of their own substance.

In summary, then, one of the most significant consequences of the renewed interest in the child – and especially in its role as a future resource – was an emphasis on the importance of the family. It was in the family, which, in ideal terms at least, most embodied the new liberal ethos, that the socialisation of the future society could be most appropriately carried out. This is a process Rose (1990: 126) has termed “familialisation,” which he argues was “crucial to the means whereby personal capacities and conducts could be socialised, shaped and maximised in a manner that accorded with the moral and political principles of liberal society.”

In this process of ‘familialisation’ the role of women in society was to change radically – while the child became the centre of the family, women were now positioned as those best able to care for them. This sprung directly from Rousseau (1911 (1762): 13), whose writing in *Emile* both reflected the new valorisation of the family, and, importantly, linked the moral decay of society to mothers who would not care for their children:

The mother whose children are out of sight wins scanty esteem; there is no home life, the ties of nature are not strengthened by those of habit; fathers, mothers, children, brothers, and sisters cease to exist. They are almost strangers; how should they love one another? Each thinks of himself first. When the home is gloomy solitude pleasure will be sought elsewhere...But when mothers deign to nurse their own children, then will be a reform in morals; natural feeling will revive in every heart; there will be no lack of citizens for the state; this first step in itself will restore mutual affection. The charms of the home are the best antidote to vice. The noisy play of children, which we thought were so trying, becomes a delight; mother and father rely more on each other and grow dearer to one another; the marriage tie is strengthened. In the cheerful home life the mother finds here sweetest duties and the father his pleasantest recreations.

The linkage of motherhood and morality that is so explicitly articulated by Rousseau in this quotation is important to note. Before moving onto a discussion of why Rousseau was so insistent on this point, however, it is first necessary to answer this question: Why were women suddenly so intimately linked to their children and the family, when in previous generations these ties had been so tenuous? There are, perhaps, many answers to this question. Feminists (see, for example, Okin, 1989; Lister, 1997; Hays, 1996) however, have generally argued that the answer is based on two important structural facts about liberal society and the family.

The first of these is that the family, in liberal society, is constructed as an entirely privatised institution. On one level this has been justified by the portrayal of children as ‘innocents’ – who need to be protected from the harsh public world. On another level this has been justified by the particularly liberal ideal of individual freedoms – that there needs to be a sphere where the state has no influence or control over individuals (King, 1987). This view has resulted in the peculiarly dichotomous socio-political structure of liberal society. The ‘public’ sphere is where the state has control – it is where civil liberties exist and it is therefore the realm in which the rights and duties of citizenship are articulated and lived (King, 1987). The ‘private’ sphere, on the other hand, is defined in opposition to the public – rights and duties do not govern here, but rather it is the sphere of affect, emotion and morality – all, in other words, that is considered to be a-political, and not related to the affairs of the state (Lister, 1997). It is the family, because of its very

personal and emotional nature, which has come to exemplify this realm of individual freedom and is therefore considered to be centre of the private sphere (see King, 1987).

The second of these is that the care of children as Walkerdine (1990), Rose (1990) and Hays (1996) have argued, became an all-consuming task. This was not only because children had regained their importance, but also because their socialisation could not now be achieved quickly or, more especially, through the use of overt force. Rather, in the spirit of egalitarianism and the new emotionally-centred nature of the family, children were to be socialised and nurtured, for a far longer time than was previously thought necessary, through the use of love – a process which meant that those tasked with childrearing had to be constantly attentive to the child and its needs (Hays, 1996).

If childcare was to take place in private and was an activity that took the utmost devotion, it is obvious that those who were to take care of children were effectively confined to the private sphere in a more-or-less permanent capacity. But because of the particular nature of liberal society – which affords civil, political and social rights to only those who exist in the ‘public’ sphere – it also means that those who are tasked with childcare, are those who are prevented from accessing those rights. Thus, because of what has come to be known as the public/private divide, and the positioning of childcare within the private half of the divide, the responsibility for childcare and a lack of access to the rights of citizenship have become inextricably linked.

Furthermore, liberal society is also a patriarchal society – one which has, in a very subtle manner, been built, according to Pateman (1991) on and around the oppression of women. It becomes clear then why this society has seen it fit to position women with the responsibility for childcare. Caring for children effectively denies people access to the rights of the public sphere. At the same time, however, it is also a very important social activity – on which the very future of that society relies. Realising both of these points, social contract philosophers such as Rousseau found it convenient to position women as those responsible for childcare. Women, because they were considered less able to appreciate the rights and responsibilities that accompanied citizenship than men (see

Okin, 1979 on Rousseau and the position of women), were more appropriate sacrifices to make to the future of society (Walkerdine, 1990).

Of course, within an ‘egalitarian’ society such as that espoused by liberalism – this relegation of women to second-class citizenship has had to be justified, and it is here that Rousseau’s linkage of motherhood with morality has been especially important. While in pre-industrial patriarchal societies the withholding of political rights from women could be justified by their ‘natural’ inferiority (Aristotle, for example, excluded women from participation in the *polis* for this reason – see Elshtain, 1982), this was unacceptable to a society in which women were, theoretically (and especially after the publication of John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* in 1869), the equals of men. Women could not, therefore, be overtly coerced into accepting their position as second-class citizens, but rather had to be convinced that this function, while different from the functions of men, was an equally important one and, in particular, one that was worth sacrificing their rights of citizenship for.

As is clear from Rousseau, this was done through the construction of motherhood as an inherently moral and existentially fulfilling activity that was, for women at least, “the optimal path to self-fulfilment” (Williams, 2000: 16). To further emphasise this women have, over the years, been bombarded with religious and nationalist discourses which have firmly entrenched the moral perceptions surrounding the task of caring for ‘innocent’ and ‘saintly’ children, the existential satisfaction that should, for any ‘normal’ woman, arise from this, as well as the idea that it is a woman’s duty to rear the citizens, soldiers and workers of future society (Hays, 1996). In modern times, the advent of psychoanalysis and its attendant theories on human development and the importance of the mother’s constant attention in the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child, have further supported these moral and existential discourses with ‘scientific’ evidence (Hays, 1996; Douglas and Michaels, 2004). The result has been a dominant view of motherhood which assumes that “all women need to be mothers, that all mothers need their children, and that all children need their mothers” (Glenn *et al.*, 1994: 7). Motherhood, in Western liberal society has therefore been idealised as the only true route

to happiness for women, as the only true route to well-being for children (and as of fundamental importance to social order by implication), and as a result women have both 'disciplined' themselves, and been 'disciplined' by society, into a position which sees them denied full access to the rights of citizenship.

The result has been a notion of liberal citizenship which is inherently gender-biased. When liberalism first asserted its influence over Western society, women, as those relegated to the private sphere, were not considered public citizens at all. Theirs was to be an indirect form of citizenship, accessible only through their husbands under the laws of coverture (Lister, 1997). While women have, in recent times, been increasingly successful at challenging this exclusion – which has resulted in the extension of full civil and political rights to women in many countries – the fact that the structure of the family (and liberal society) still relies on women's unpaid care work, means that despite this formal equality, women are still barred from effectively accessing many of these rights. In particular, it is women's lack of access to economic citizenship that has, in recent times, become the primary focus of feminist critiques of liberal society. While women may now have the vote, their continuing responsibility for care – which consumes enormous amounts of time and physical and emotional energy – means that they have less time, and less opportunity, to access employment outside of the home. The result is that women are, after many years of feminist struggle, still largely economically reliant on men. Thus, full access to citizenship even now, feminists have argued, is gendered and needs to be re-evaluated, particularly in light of women's responsibility for care and the way in which this prevents them from accessing their economic rights.

In arguing for this re-evaluation – whether it be a re-evaluation of the role of women in society (equality feminism), or a re-evaluation of the concept of citizenship itself (difference feminism) – feminists have essentially argued for the widening of citizenship rights to a group that, under the original laws of liberal society, were wholly excluded from them. As stated in the introduction, however, this call for the widening of access to citizenship rights has generally run counter to the neo-liberal, New Right trend of narrowing access to these rights (King, 1987). As King (1987) has argued, neo-liberalism

cannot survive without some form of social inequality, and, in particular, without the cheap source of labour that generally arises from this inequality. To widen citizenship rights is to lessen inequality, and neo-liberal markets cannot function optimally in this context. This is particularly so in the case of women's role in the family – neo-liberalism depends on women's unpaid labour in the home to reproduce its future workers for free (Taylor, 1997). Challenging this status quo by including women as fully respected citizens, is to effectively challenge the organisation of capitalist social reproduction, which is seen as wholly undesirable to neo-liberals. As a result neo-liberals and feminists find themselves, in general, at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that with the South African government's adoption and acceptance of neo-liberal economic policies and social norms, its commitment to gender equality has fallen by the wayside. Gender equality and neo-liberalism do not sit comfortably together (see Taylor, 1997), and, because the government has seemingly placed more practical emphasis on its neo-liberal policies than on its gender policies, women's role as unpaid carers has been emphasised rather than broken down. As a consequence, women (and their children) remain the most marginalized sector of South African society. The following chapter will provide empirical weight to this claim by detailing how the government's near total withdrawal from the affairs of the family has affected South African women and children. In doing so it hopes also to indicate that a real and urgent need exists for some form of state-based childcare intervention strategy.

Chapter 3

The introductory chapter of this thesis argued that because of the lack of any concrete, practical engagement with the notion of substantive gender equality, women in South Africa are still, in terms of access to their socio-economic rights, second-class citizens. It was argued that this is, largely, the result of an almost total lack of state intervention in the affairs of the family, and, in particular, women's responsibility for childcare. This, it was further argued, has meant that it is not only women who are being marginalised, but it is also their children – who, because of the social subordination of their mothers, are being denied their right to receive the best care possible. The second half of Chapter 1 then explained, in more detailed theoretical terms, how and why feminists have argued that the responsibility for childcare, within liberal society, has been central to the exclusion of women from the rights and benefits of social citizenship. This chapter hopes to add empirical weight to both of these arguments by describing the existing state of childcare in South Africa.

In doing so this chapter will attempt to highlight the fact that there is a real and urgent need for some form of state-based childcare support. It will do this firstly by showing that, due to the current lack of state-support as well as certain historical factors, there exists the potential for a considerable amount of what is known as 'work/family conflict' (see Googins, 1991; Brannen and Moss, 1991) in the lives of South African women, which, it will be shown, has contributed in no insignificant way, to their economic marginalisation. The chapter will then proceed to describe how women, in the absence of state intervention, and in light of their need (or desire) to access economic opportunities, have managed to find childcare solutions of their own. It will then be argued that the arrangements that currently exist are unsatisfactory for all concerned – not least the children involved – thereby once again emphasising the need for state intervention.

Before any other comments can be made on childcare in South Africa, however, it is first necessary to understand that the majority of South Africa's children do not grow up in the traditional Western nuclear family. According to Amoateng *et al.*, (2004), while 38.7

percent of people – mainly white – live in nuclear families, 54.21 percent live in what is known as an ‘extended’ family structure. Extended families are part of the traditional social organisation of African society (Manona, 1981). The extended family is usually characterised by the presence of several generations in one household. Within these families, childcare is a decentred activity, where biological parenthood does not necessarily directly equate with full responsibility for the upbringing of the children in question – often it is left up to grandmothers, aunts or sisters (Manona, 1981; Wilson, 2006). Extended family structures are, therefore, a considerable source of childcare support, and will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

In addition to this there are a significant number of children who grow up in households where either one or both parents are absent (Posel and Devey, 2006; Wilson, 2006). According to Wilson (2006) 1993 statistics show that in the rural areas, up to two-thirds of children live with one or more parents missing. In the urban areas this figure is slightly improved, with 15 percent of children living with no parents present, and 42 percent living with only one parent. In many cases, as several authors (Posel and Devey, 2006; Wilson, 2006) have shown, it is often the father who is the absent parent. This, in particular, is an important point to note and it is therefore necessary to gain some understanding of how this situation has come about.

The absence of fathers from many families in South Africa is largely a result of the legacy of migrant labour (Wilson, 2006). In traditional African society, before the arrival of industrialisation, urbanisation and apartheid, while it was women who were largely responsible for the physical act of childcare, the role of the father in the life of the child was an important one (Manona, 1981; Wilson, 2006). Fathers were chief disciplinarians. They were the ones tasked with instilling the “values and behaviour patterns” that kept society functioning in a more-or-less coherent manner by not only ensuring that “the socialisation of the young functioned within a homogenous framework” (Manona, 1981: 127), but also by maintaining the coherence of their family units through the concept of *ubudoda*, or “competent and benevolent management of the household” (Wilson, 2006).

Thus, within the extended family structure, men had an integral part to play in the rearing of children.

With the arrival of industrialisation and the need for a source of cheap labour to fuel this, however, this traditional social framework – and in particular, the role of the father within it – was threatened. This was not only because young men had to give up subsistence farming and move into the urban areas in order to earn wages (Cock, 1980), but because the process of urbanisation in South Africa was entwined with apartheid and the Group Areas Act, industrialisation also meant that these men, often working on the goldmines and living in specially constructed compounds, were unable to bring their families with them (Manona, 1981; Amoateng *et al.*, 2004; Wilson, 2006). Thus, as a result of migrant labour, the absence of fathers from the lives of their children became a feature of rural African family life (Amoateng *et al.*, 2004; Wilson, 2006).

As a consequence of this, Wilson (2006) has argued, boys and young men in the rural areas have grown up with little or no understanding of *ubudoda*, which, according to Wilson (2006), has resulted in the emergence of an African masculine culture – mirrored in the urban areas – which tends to disavow any responsibility for childcare, both emotionally and financially. In support of this Denis and Ntsimane (2006) have argued, citing Clive Glaser’s (1992) study of young African *tsotsis* in the Witwatersrand, that while these men are often happy to “father children to prove their manhood” it is unusual for them to help support their children, and that, as a result of this breakdown of *ubudoda*, an “increasing number of men desert their children” (Denis and Ntsimane, 2006: 240).

One of the most prominent legacies of migrant labour, therefore, has been the emergence of a significant number of single mothers and female-headed households (Posel and Devey, 2006; Denis and Ntsimane, 2006). According to Denis and Ntsimane (2006: 240) data collected in KwaMashu and the greater Durban area in the late 1970s and early 1980s indicated that “at least 60 percent and possibly as high as 80 percent of births were to young unmarried women.” More recent statistics do not appear to indicate that this has

changed. Posel and Devey (2006), for example, state that in 2002, less than 40 percent of African children under the age of fifteen lived with their fathers. Furthermore the 2002 Statistics South Africa *October General Household Survey*, found that while 39 percent of children under the age of seven live with both parents, 45 percent live only with their mothers, compared to only two percent who live with their fathers. Female-headed households now make up over 40 percent of all households in South Africa (Baden *et al.*, 1998).

Thus, it becomes clear, in particularly South African terms, why the *WPSWs* stress on the importance of familial ‘self-reliance,’ referred to in the introduction, means that it emphasises the position of women as carers. It is because the stable, relatively permanent family structures in South Africa very often consist only of women (Denis and Ntsimane, 2006). Of course it is not only these single mothers who bear the highly unequal responsibility for childcare. Even within middle-class nuclear families with both parents present, Maconachie (1992), found women tend to assume far more responsibility for domestic tasks than their husbands. Similarly, a study conducted by Naidoo and Jano (2002) found that only 26 percent of women managers interviewed in their research sample group shared household and childcare responsibilities with their husbands.

It is, however, necessary to emphasise the issue of single mothers, firstly because it is such a prominent feature of childcare in South Africa, and secondly because the presence of a large number of single mothers tends to highlight, in the most explicit manner, the way in which women have had to juggle their work and family commitments. This is because single mothers have to assume the responsibility for childcare, while at the same time they are also often the sole source of financial support for their children. This leads to a considerable conflict between the need to work and the need to provide care for children, and often results in a vicious cycle where mothers, because of their care duties, are unable to work the hours necessary to earn a good salary. This in the end compromises the quality of care they can afford to provide for their children (Lund, 2005).

Once again, however, while single mothers tend to be on the extreme end, it is all mothers who experience, to varying degrees, this work/family conflict. An increasing number of women, from across the class spectrum, participate in market-related employment. According to Casale and Posel (2002: 157): “Of the total number of jobs in the [South African] economy, an increasing proportion in 1999 were occupied by women.” While this increased participation is in part a result of increased economic need (Casale and Posel, 2002), it is also because a growing number of women do find market related employment outside of the home a considerable source of self-esteem and identity (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Googins, 1991).

Women’s highly unequal responsibility for childcare, as was argued in more theoretical terms in the previous chapter, severely hampers this participation, however. A 2000 Time Use study conducted by Statistics South Africa, for instance, showed that women spend up to eleven times longer a day on childcare related tasks than men, which, the study concluded had a direct impact on the amount of time women were able to spend on economic activities. Furthermore, a study conducted by Geber (2000: 11) on middle-class South African women found that only 13.7 percent of the group sampled took no career break at the birth of a child, while 51 percent put their “careers ‘on hold’ whilst they raised their children.” This is a predictable statistic when it becomes evident how much stress is placed on those mothers who wish to remain in the work environment. A recent South African survey, for example, found that female employees in the 60 companies analysed, were 14 percent more likely to be suffering from psychological illnesses such as depression and stress than males, and 55 percent more likely to be suffering from headaches and migraines. The result was that women tended to be absent from work more often (Staff Reporter, *Daily Dispatch*, 9 August 2005: 6). It was concluded that these figures were indicative of the toll work/family conflicts were having on the lives of South African women.

It is unsurprising then that women in South Africa tend to occupy employment positions “typically associated with low earnings, little protection and insecure working conditions” (Casale and Posel, 2002: 157). Forty percent of employed women between

the ages of 15 and 65 are in unskilled jobs – compared to 20 percent of men – and women tend to earn salaries that are far lower, on average, than those of men (Budlender, 2002). In 2002, 23 percent of men earned more than R4500 a month, compared to only 14 percent of women, 19 percent of whom survived on salaries of less than R200 a month (Budlender, 2002). As a result female-headed households are amongst the poorest in the country. According to Baden *et al.*, (1998), 49 percent of these households are classified as ‘poor,’ and 26 percent fall into the ‘ultra-poor’ category. In comparison, 32 percent of male-headed households were classified as ‘poor,’ and only 13 percent were classified as ‘ultra-poor.’

Within the middle-classes, large wage disparities also exist between men and women. Hinks (2002), for example, found that the biggest gender wage differentials, relatively speaking, existed between men and women of the (largely middle-class) white population. White men, he found, earned nine percent more than the hypothetical ‘average’ worker, while white women earned 28 percent less than this average (Hinks, 2002). In addition to this, according to the 2005 *South African Women in Corporate Leadership Census*, women occupy less than 20 percent of the country’s top jobs – only 19.8 percent of the country’s executive managers are women, and women make up only 10.7 percent of all directors and six point two percent of chief executive and board chairs in the country (I-Net Bridge, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 20 April 2005). According to Williams (2000), the discrimination faced by these women is often related to the so-called ‘mommy-track’ phenomenon, where an unspoken consensus dictates that women with family responsibilities cannot fulfil the criteria of top professional jobs – which require long hours and total commitment. This kind of total commitment, as has been shown, cannot be afforded by women with childcare responsibilities. As one frustrated working mother recently wrote to the *Mail and Guardian* (Mapetla, 28 October 2005: 15): “I know there are many women like me, black and white, who have all the trappings of success, but face a daily soul-destroying fight for corporate survival. I’ve lost count of the times I’ve been reprimanded for not working at weekends and for doing catch-up reading in the office instead of after-hours... Women and mothers, in particular, have

inescapable nurturing duties that often use the same after-hours time they are expected to spend working.”

In this chapter so far, two important points have now been made clear. Firstly, there are a large number of women in South Africa who are trying to juggle the financial support with the physical and emotional support that their children are considered to need. Secondly, there is a clear link between the women’s highly unequal responsibility for childcare, from across the race and class spectrum, and their economic marginalisation. Both of these points demonstrate that there is a real need for some form of state-based childcare support. The next section will hopefully add further emphasis to this fact, by attempting to describe how women have managed, so far, to deal with their work/family conflicts.

Current Childcare Arrangements in South Africa

Work/family conflicts are a progressively more pervasive part of family life throughout the world, as an ever increasing number of women move into the workforce (Googins, 1991; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Williams, 2000; Mahon, 2002; Bergman, 2004). As Mahon (2002) and Bergman (2004) have shown, in European countries, this has led to an increasing emphasis on state-based childcare support, and has engendered much debate within policy making circles. In South Africa, however, this debate has been more muted, despite the very obvious work/family conflicts that are occurring. In many ways this is because South African women have, to a certain degree, been cushioned both by a source of cheap, African labour, and the extensive network of kinship care that was mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter. Thus, depending on class position, women have been able to shift some of their childcare responsibility either onto domestic workers, who serve over one million households in South Africa and who make up 18 percent of total female employment (Mills, 2002), or onto unemployed relatives such as grandmothers, aunts, sisters, or older children (usually daughters – Cock, 1980). In contrast, in European countries, where there is an absence of cheap domestic labour and where only the very wealthy are able to afford private nannies, women have been left

with little other choice but to vigorously petition the state and, in a society where there are no cheap ‘outs,’ governments have been unable to ignore this.

Thus, in a self-perpetuating cycle, South African women, because of the lack of state-support, have had to rely on privatised care arrangements – either domestic workers, or family members – which in turn has allowed the state, in some ways, to get away with its withdrawal from childcare support. As will be argued, however, these arrangements, whether in the form of kinship care or in the form of domestic ‘nannies,’ tend to be highly unsatisfactory for all concerned. The next section will attempt to show why this is so firstly by arguing that these arrangements are unsatisfactory for the carers, then moving onto why this is so for mothers and children.

For the women who are left with the physical task of childcare, the fact that it is a highly personalised arrangement, that occurs in “the private sphere where there is little opportunity for scrutiny and transparency” (Mills, 2002: 1212), means that often these women are the most exploited of all. This is particularly so with domestic workers who, despite legislation aimed at regularising and monitoring this sector (see Department of Labour, Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1999, Sectoral Determination 7), continue to work long hours for very little pay. In a recent *Mail and Guardian Online* article (18 November 2005), for example, Yolande Groenewald noted that many employers of domestic workers are still not adhering to the minimum standards laid out by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. More than 20 percent of South African domestic workers still earn less than the governments stipulated minimum wage, and almost 45 percent of these women work six to seven days a week, and 58 percent work between eight and 10 hours a day.

For the women who care for the children of their kin, there is also a certain level of exploitation. This is because it is often those who are too old or who are too young who are left with the responsibility for care (Cock, 1981; Lund 2005). This means that young girls often have to stay out of school to care for children (Cock, 1981), and that grandmothers, particularly if mothers are not earning enough, often have to support

several grandchildren on their old age pensions (Duflo, 2003). All of this, as Cock (1981: 80) has argued, perpetuates “a vicious cycle of poverty...and interrupted education.”

For the mothers and children who rely on these childcare solutions the problem is to do with the quality of care that children are receiving. For middle-class women this has much to do with the transmission of what Pierre Bourdieu (1986) has termed ‘cultural capital.’ Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986) is central to the subtle “reproduction of privilege” (Jenkins, 1992: 104) that is so important to the middle-classes in particular. While the middle-classes are not able to provide their children with great financial legacies, they are able to provide them with a certain intellectual/moral/social understanding of the world, that comes across in numerous ways from the manner in which they talk and walk, to their inherent tastes and styles (Bourdieu, 1986). These modes of thinking and behaving, while subtle, also form a concrete barrier between the middle-classes and the lower classes – in effect, they determine which level of society an individual will ‘naturally’ fit into – and thus what level of social privilege they will be able to access.

The most important, and earliest, source of cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986: 247), is the family: “...the initial accumulation of cultural capital, the precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital.” Much of this initial accumulation comes from educational activities. The reading of books, as well as other more general interactions with parents which prepare children to absorb the cultural capital they receive in other settings – peer group interactions and at school – in a more efficient manner than those children who have come from families who lack this cultural capital. It is very important for children then – if they are to fit into what society deems ‘successful’ – that from an early age they are exposed to the cultural capital of their parents. In this, as Stoker (2002) has argued, it is often the mother, because of her socially sanctioned responsibility for childcare, who is placed under the most pressure to ensure that this exposure takes place.

It is here that the problem with domestic workers comes in. Most domestic workers are extremely poorly educated. According to Mills (2002), 50 percent of domestic workers have only primary school level education, and 20 percent have no education whatsoever. Thus it seems clear that domestic workers who act as nannies, with very little education themselves, are not appropriate carers in terms of the transmission of cultural capital. Society dictates that children, if they are to be 'successful' in later life, need to be read to, need to engage in educational play activities and need to be grow up in an environment where 'middle-classness' is absorbed into their very bodily movements. This is considered to be what 'quality' childcare consists of, and this cannot be provided by carers who themselves lack the essential 'middle-class' characteristics that are deemed desirable.

This problem of lack of cultural capital in carers is a problem for women who rely on kinship networks too. Working-class women are likely to realise that their children are missing out on something that would allow them to improve their class position when they are confined to carers who are unable to stimulate them intellectually and emotionally. Moller (1990), for example, has shown in her research conducted in KwaMashu, KwaZulu-Natal, that the lack of mental stimulation that characterises childcare in this area is a great source of concern for many mothers, who place as one of their top priorities the provision of high-quality institutionalised childcare facilities.

Lack of mental stimulation is, however, only one aspect of the childcare problems faced by poorer women in South Africa. Other problems relate to the basic neglect and abuse of children that occur in these settings. Lund (2005), for example, cites a study conducted by Sekhamane (2004) on the childcare arrangements of women working in clothing factories. The study was conducted on women working long hours, and who also had malnourished children and had therefore been participating in a food programme that supplied their children with nutritional supplements. These women, due to financial constraints, were using much younger or much older relatives to care for their children (Lund, 2005). After interviewing both the mothers and the caregivers, Sekhamane (2004) then observed the care-givers interactions with the children. The study found that the

standard of care provided was extremely low, and in some cases, even compromised the health of the children. “Observation of the younger care-givers showed their inexperience: they were often neglectful of their duties, were easily distracted, which was understandable given their youth; in some cases they ate the child’s food themselves” (Lund, 2005: 14). Moller’s (1990) research in KwaMashu also found that grandmothers were often considered to be poor carers – many references were made amongst the respondents about grandmothers being drunk and therefore unable to ensure the physical safety of children. Of course, these studies are not generalisable to all grandmothers, and to all kinship network care-givers, but they do give an insight into the “relationship between employment, poverty and parenting” (Lund, 2005: 14).

Increasingly worrying for these women and children too, is that the system of kinship care, already stretched, is being put under immense strain by the escalating incidence of HIV/AIDS, which has seen many children left parentless. The Department of Health has estimated that by 2010, two million children in South Africa will have been orphaned by the virus. While this raises the spectre of child-headed households, as Meintjes *et al.*, (2003) have argued, this is not yet a phenomenon that is overly prevalent, except in a temporary form, as, to a large extent, existing communal networks have been able to absorb the children. However, as the authors go on to argue, with the pandemic worsening huge physical, as well as financial strain is going to be placed on those networks, both because of the increasing number of children in need of care and the decline in numbers of an older generation of women less likely to be infected by the virus.

The situation of women and children in South Africa is therefore hardly ideal. It is clear that women’s unquestioned responsibility for childcare, even with the cheap source of childcare support that is available to most women, has placed severe limitations on their ability to access economic opportunities. The use of this cheap childcare labour is itself problematic. Not only is it an extremely exploitative practice, but cycles of poverty and marginalisation are perpetuated over and over again when women have no option but to leave their children in the care of badly-resourced, low-quality care. In this situation, as argued

earlier, it is children who suffer most acutely. In the face of an almost complete lack of state-supported childcare solutions, however, women have had little other choice. With the HIV/AIDS pandemic beginning to seriously threaten already stretched kinship networks, it is clearly imperative that the government begin to offer some form of support to women. It cannot do otherwise if it is to commit itself seriously to both the future of South Africa's children and the equality of South Africa's women. This thesis will now move on to an examination of the practical ways in which the state could envisage a role for itself.

As stated in the introduction, however, there is a split between how feminists have articulated this role. On the one hand, 'equality' feminists have supported socialised care policies, and on the other hand difference feminists have supported what Mahon (2002) has termed a 'neo-familialist' model of state support, which is centred on the payment of cash grants to mothers who remain in the home. The next two chapters will examine both of these models, and attempt to determine which might work most effectively in South Africa.

Chapter 4

This chapter will discuss the provision of a widely-accessible, state-sponsored socialised day care network as one mechanism whereby the South African state could realise, in practice, its own stated aims with regard to gender equality. In doing so it will examine the argument for socialised care that the so-called ‘equality’ feminists have put forward and will attempt to show how this has been put into practice in countries such as Sweden and Denmark. The chapter will then weigh up whether socialised care is an appropriate, and practicable, solution to women and children’s marginalisation in South Africa.

Before moving on, however, it is necessary to point out that, worldwide, the argument for socialised care has received mixed reactions (Lamb and Sternberg, 1992). While it was shown in Chapter 1 that the idea of socialised care is not a new one – Plato’s *Republic*, for example, argued that it was crucial to the basic social structure of the ideal state – it is an idea that has largely been sidelined by a society which has been built very strongly on what Williams (2000: 55) has termed “the norm of parental care.” This ideal, so strongly articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile*, has emphasised that good childcare can only be carried out in the home (the ‘private’ sphere), and that it is only parents, and particularly mothers, who are able to provide children with the care and nurture they need (Hays, 1996; Douglas and Michaels, 2004). Socialised care for children, which not only removes much of the responsibility for childcare from parents, but which also challenges the notion that childcare is a private activity – therefore runs very much against the ideological grain of liberal, capitalist society, with its emphasis on individualism, familial self-reliance and its strongly entrenched public/private division (Lamb and Sternberg, 1992).

Nevertheless, despite this basic ideological disjuncture, since the 1960s, ‘equality’ feminists have made the call for the provision of high-quality, widely-accessible, state-funded socialised childcare, one of the foundations of their policy campaigns. The ‘equality’ in equality feminism refers to the fact that this strand of feminist thought has attempted to include women as citizens on the same terms as men and as the equals of

men. As a way in which to achieve this goal, these feminists have attempted to break down the supposed 'natural' divisions between men and women, which they claim have served to justify the subordination of women (Young, 1989; Lister, 1997). In this, the construction of women as mothers has been an obvious target. Equality feminists argue that if it is motherhood which has largely justified the exclusion of women from citizenship, then it is motherhood which needs to be attacked if women are ever be emancipated. Much of their focus therefore, largely inspired by one of the forerunners of modern feminism, Simone De Beauvoir (1949: 5) who famously stated that "one is not born a woman, but becomes a woman," has been on exposing the socially constructed nature of motherhood.

In doing so feminists have hoped to undermine the "pseudo-naturalist" (De Beauvoir, 1949: 538) argument that women are naturally bound to the care of their children and in order to do this many of them have used a similar historical analysis to the one laid out in Chapter 1 (see for example Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, 1970). The fact that 'motherly love' only surfaced in any prominent way after the rise of liberal, capitalist society, these feminists argue, is proof that motherhood, as we know it today, is part of a particular social strategy, that, having been built on the subordination of women (see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 1991), has come to rely on this subordination for the reproduction of its future society. The construction of women as mothers, therefore, is merely a way in which society is able to conveniently enforce women's marginal position. Furthermore, equality feminists argue, it is possible, because of the socially constructed nature of motherhood, to conceive of a society in which the ability to give birth to a child does not automatically mean responsibility for childcare (Okin, 1989). Women, they argue, citing the historical evidence used in Chapter 1, are not necessarily 'natural' carers and, as a result, motherhood is not necessarily the path to true existential fulfilment for women and that it can, because of the oppressive circumstances in which it is embedded, lead to the exact opposite. De Beauvoir (1949: 525) claimed, for example, that "maternity gives rise to a feeling of morose disappointment in subjects who hope that an outward event can renovate and justify their lives."

In attacking women's socially sanctioned role as primary carers, equality feminists have also emphasised that childcare can and should be shared by men and women equally (see Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, 1989). Along with this, however, there has also been a realisation that the incentives towards childrearing, in a society that values individualism and self-sufficiency (Grimshaw, 1986) – and in particular, economic self-sufficiency – are few and far between. Polatnick (1983), for example, has argued that men are unlikely to ever assume childrearing roles on equal terms with women, not only because it hampers access to employment opportunities (part of the 'public' sphere), but because childrearing holds none of the social privileges that market-related employment does. According to Polatnick (1983: 24) involvement in market-work provides men with control over financial resources, social status through occupational achievement, as well as numerous other "tangible and intangible benefits," such as "organisational experience, social contacts, 'knowledge of the world,' and feelings of independence and competence," which they are unlikely to give up for the low status activity of childcare.

'Difference' feminists have argued that the social rewards that emanate from employment need to be re-examined in light of the fact that women are often, due to their equally important – but unpaid and low-status – caring roles, excluded from these opportunities. However, the feminists who have argued for socialised care have tended to adopt the position that the only way women's marginalisation can realistically be halted is if women are able to access the same opportunities that men are able to – that they too should be able to benefit from the "tangible and intangible" (Polatnick, 1983: 24) rewards of market-related employment and that they, like men, should therefore be unhindered by childcare responsibilities. It is here, particularly, that the argument for socialised care comes in. If the responsibility for childcare hampers access to economic opportunities and if access to economic opportunities is seen as desirable for both men and women, equality feminists argue, the only really viable solution in terms of childcare is that the state should take responsibility for this through the provision of high-quality day-care facilities.

In arguing this, as Grimshaw (1986) has pointed out, equality feminism has accepted one of the basic philosophical tenets of liberal society, which places primacy on independence and individualism, and which today is inextricably entwined with economic status. Women are to be included in the definition of the independent individual, on equal terms with men, and the way in which to do this is to become economically independent. In effect, what this means that they have to remove themselves from the relationship that is motherhood. This is because mothers can never really be independent individuals and neither can they be economically secure – their ability to access economic opportunities and to act as individuals will always be constrained by their need to provide care and to think of the needs of another human being (Grimshaw, 1986). In this trade-off, equality feminists argue, it is vital that women reject motherhood.

It must at this point be stated, however, that while this position generally forms the basis of equality feminism, within this brand of feminist thought there are at least three major ideological positions which differ considerably on two points: a) the extent to which women's responsibility for childcare should be rejected and b) the underlying cause of their oppression within liberal, capitalist society. Before moving onto any further arguments about socialised care, it is first necessary to gain some insight into, and acknowledge the existence of, these differences. The next section will therefore be devoted to a brief discussion of the differences between three major strands of equality feminist thought – liberal, radical and Marxist.

For liberal feminists such as Betty Friedan, whose hugely popular work *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was a major catalyst for the 'sex-role' revolution in the United States, it was necessary to urge women to move into the workforce and to assume a social role that consisted of more than "marrying at eighteen" and "losing themselves in having babies and the details of housekeeping" (Friedan, 1963: 67). This, she argued would not only decrease the economic dependence of women on men, but it would also allow women to "face the question of their own identity" (Friedan, 1963: 67) and so become the self-actualised independent individuals that liberalism valorises (Grimshaw, 1986). At the

same time, however, Friedan did not urge a complete rejection of the nuclear family or even its basic structure. Rather, she argued that women “should minimise, but not eschew, their family responsibilities” (Okin, 1997: 16). This failure to critique either the structure or the nature of one of cornerstones of liberal society – the nuclear family – is characteristic of liberal feminism, which tends to accept basic liberal social principles, and queries only the fact that these principles have traditionally excluded women from access to the public sphere (Connell, 1990).

Harsher critiques of the family and its structure were to come from more radical feminists such as Kate Millett (1971), and from the Marxist feminists. Millett (1971), who, in her work *Sexual Politics*, introduced the notion of patriarchy, attempted to show that familial relationships, far from being as neutral as liberal feminism portrays them to be, are in fact deeply oppressive social productions. Millett (1971: 33), for example, argued that the family, as “patriarchy’s chief institution,” is the primary site of sexual oppression, where “women’s labour is exploited, male sexual power may be violently expressed and oppressive gender identities and modes of behaviour...learned” (Bryson, 1992: 198). The only escape from this for women, she argued, was to overthrow the nuclear family as an institution, a call which was taken up by other radical feminists – most famously Shulamith Firestone (1970) who, in her work *The Dialectic of Sex*, argued for a complete separation of women from their familial, and in particular, childrearing functions. Firestone (1970), who viewed not only the social activity of motherhood as oppressive, but also the biological state of pregnancy, expressed the hope that the future advancement of reproductive technologies would allow women to escape the “tyranny of their biology” completely (Firestone, 1970: 270). In a similar vein Jeffner Allen (1983: 317), another radical feminist, in a chapter entitled “Motherhood: The Annihilation of Women,” called for the “evacuation” of women from the entire concept of motherhood, a concept which she claims involves “the patriarchal (male) sexuality’s use of woman’s body as a resource to reproduce patriarchy.”

Marxist feminists (such as Delphy, 1992; Hartsock, 1998) have also been very critical of the basic structure of the nuclear family. Their emphasis has however been focused less

on patriarchy as the root of women's oppression, and more on capitalism which, they argue, is a system based on the exploitation of women's free domestic labour (Delphy and Leonard, 1992). In arguing this Marxist feminists have extended the more general Marxist critique of the capitalist exploitation of workers, and applied this to the position of women in the family (Okin, 1997). According to Marxist feminists then, women are subject to a "double exploitation under capitalism" – they are both exploited as waged labourers as well as for "their unpaid reproduction of the labour force in the family" (Okin, 1997: 16). "Class oppression and sex oppression," according to Marxist feminist theory, are "distinct but linked" (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 30). "The working class experiences material and ideological oppression as a class; and women experience certain common material and ideological oppressions which are not directly related to class but derive from their experience as a sex and their productive and reproductive roles within capitalist society" (Delphy and Leonard, 1992: 30). To Marxist feminists then, women's oppression can be explained at a fundamental level by the socio-economic structuring of capitalism, which relies on the nuclear family as its base of labour force reproduction. Once again, then, it is seen as necessary to fundamentally restructure and redefine the family, and in particular, women's position as mothers – which inextricably ties them to the role of unpaid, exploited reproducers of future capitalist society.

However, despite these differences, and because of their basic agreement that the role of women in society needs to be re-defined, liberal, radical and Marxist feminists have largely been able to present a unified front in terms of practical policy struggles (Dinner, 2004). As a result, equality feminism has won some major concessions to women's rights over the last forty years. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Sweden, where the call for gender equality has been most seriously engaged with by state structures (Berqvist and Jungar, 2000; Mahon, 2002). While both of these countries have instituted a number of policies which have attempted to give practical effect to formal gender equality commitments (Mahon, 2002), one of the most conspicuous is the widespread provision of socialised day-care. In both Denmark and Sweden the provision of public-funded care for children, from the ages of nought to six is facilitated through municipal day-care centres, which are both numerous and of a

high quality (Hwang and Broberg, 1992; Mahon, 2002). Most children under the age of three participate in some form of socialised care programme in Denmark (Brannen and Moss, 1991), and all children between the ages of three and six in Sweden have the right, by law, to be placed in a day-care facility within three months of application (Mahon, 2002). These facilities are also heavily state-funded – parents in Denmark only pay, according to a sliding scale, up to a third of total costs, while in Sweden parents generally only have to contribute around 10 to 20 percent of the costs. (Hwang and Broberg, 1992; Mahon, 2002). Due in part to these widespread and relatively cheap day-care provisions, Denmark and Sweden have some of the highest rates of female employment in the world – in Sweden 80 to 85 percent of women are employed, compared to only 67 percent in countries like the United States, which has very little in the way of publicly funded day-care (Andersson, 1989; Gustafsson and Stafford, 1995).

Important to note, however, is that the provision of these day-care facilities is not only linked to gender-equality policy, but also to the child's right to basic education (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Mahon, 2002). Thus the state provision of day-care in Sweden and Denmark has not only been a consequence of a concern for women's rights, it has also been a result of a concern for children's rights. This is an important point to discuss further because if day-care is not only of benefit to women, but also to children, and if this thesis is about articulating the ways in which the marginalisation of *both* women and children in South Africa can be alleviated, then it is obviously necessary to understand how and why day-care could be beneficial to children. The next section will therefore attempt to provide further justifications for the provision of socialised care in South Africa, by looking at the advantages that this could have for children.

The Benefits of Socialised Care for Children

The linkage of day-care to educational outcomes for children has come about largely as a result of an extensive cognitive development literature which has indicated that the earlier children are exposed to educational stimuli, the better their cognitive performance in later life (Andersson, 1989). Andersson (1989: 864), for example, in a longitudinal study of Swedish children from the ages of nought to eight years, found that “children entering

day-care at an early age performed significantly better on cognitive tests and received more positive ratings from their teachers in terms of school achievement and social-personal attributes than children entering day-care at later ages and those in home care.”

Perhaps more pertinent to the South African context, however, is the literature which indicates that, for children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, high-quality, institutionalised day-care has a number of cognitive, developmental and social advantages (Burchinal *et al.*, 1989; Biersteker and Vale, 2003). This is perhaps best exemplified by the Head Start programme in the United States – a state-funded programme targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds and created to address the cycles of poverty and marginalisation that arise from the lack of early cognitive stimulation that is characteristic of childcare in poor socio-economic settings (Stevens, 1997). Head Start was initiated in 1965, and has since grown to be a four point seven billion dollar programme, which serves more than 800 000 children in the United States (Garces *et al.*, 2002). While Head Start has received criticism from certain sectors who argue that the benefits accrued by the children who attend the programme are short-term, as Garces *et al.*, (2002) have shown, there are many longer term benefits for these children. In particular, Garces *et al.*, (2002: 999) found that:

...for Whites, participation in Head Start is associated with a significantly increased probability of completing high school and attending college as well as elevated earnings in one’s early twenties. African-Americans who participated in Head Start are less likely to have been booked for or charged with a crime. [There is] also...suggestive evidence that African-American males who attended Head Start are more likely than their siblings to have completed high school.

It could be argued, therefore, that the provision of quality state-subsidised childcare facilities such as those in Sweden or Denmark, or perhaps following the design of Head Start, would also do much to end the cycles of poverty that are perpetuated through the poor quality of care that many children receive in South Africa. In particular the problem of the lack of cognitive stimulation in existing childcare arrangements that was identified as a major concern in Moller’s (1990) KwaMashu study (discussed in Chapter 2), and which has contributed significantly to a Grade One dropout rate of over 25 percent

(Stevens, 1997), could be addressed. As Seleoane (2004) has argued, in a country with illiteracy rates reaching 75 percent of adults in some areas (it is estimated that between 9 and 12.5 million South African adults are illiterate), many parents or carers are ill-equipped to offer crucial early educational stimuli to their children.

The knock-on effects of this are felt throughout the educational system. Many children have little or no parental encouragement or support in terms of their education – out of a class of Grade Five learners at one school visited by local Grahamstown newspaper reporters, 21 were unable to read in English (Colyn and Ferreira, *Grocotts Mail*, November 2005: 3). The findings of a 1999 Statistics South Africa survey adds further evidence that children are not receiving the educational support they require – it found that 24.6 percent of 16 years olds had not yet been able to complete primary school, and that 31.4 percent of 21 year olds were still trying to complete their secondary schooling. The widespread provision of early education centres – doubling up as day-care facilities for working mothers – might be able, following the evidence from Head Start and the other studies mentioned above, to halt this high dropout and failure rate, to a certain extent at least, by allowing impoverished children some form educational support from a young age (see Seleoane, 2004).

Furthermore, as a recent study conducted in the United States (Lewin, *Eastern Cape Herald*, 3 November 2005: 14) found that children in day-care centres are “safer than those who receive care in private homes, whether in a neighbour’s home or by a nanny in the child’s own home.” This might then address the worries of the many mothers mentioned in Chapter 2 who are forced to leave their children with carers who are too old or too young to ensure the physical safety of their children. In addition to this, widespread, professionally staffed day-care facilities might go some way to combating the high levels of child abuse and neglect that occur in South Africa. According to Berry and Guthrie (2003), in 2000 there were over 72 000 cases of crimes against children committed, and in 1997/1998 over 23 000 cases of child neglect were reported to state child welfare services. Placing children in institutions with professional staff, trained to

ensure the safety of children and to be attentive to their needs, would surely help prevent, or at least limit, some of these crimes.

It could be argued, then, that the provision of state-subsidised socialised care in South Africa would not only be beneficial for women, but also for children. Following the feminist argument, women would be freed from much of their childcare responsibilities, and would, at least theoretically, be able to access their economic rights on a similar footing to men. In addition to this there is the potential for a number of benefits for children – both developmentally and socially. There are, however, a number of problems – in relation to both women and children – with the argument for socialised care in general terms and, perhaps more importantly, in terms particular to South Africa. The next section will attempt to give an overview of some of these problems.

Socialised Care in South Africa: Problems and Potential Pitfalls

One of the biggest problems with the argument for socialised care is that while it has certainly facilitated the movement of women into the workforce in places like Sweden and Denmark, it has still not translated into absolute gender equality. According to Williams (2000), in Sweden women still only earn 37 percent of the country's total wages, despite the fact that socialised care has been available for the last 30 years (Hwang and Broberg, 1992). This is largely because women are still concentrated in low-paying or part-time work – according to Williams (2000), 43 percent of employed women in Sweden work only on a part-time basis. Furthermore in countries such as Finland, where socialised care is also widely accessible, the number of children in day-care centres has fallen – only 22 percent of Finnish children under the age of three are in day-care (Bergman, 2004). This has been accompanied by a drop in female employment – in 1985, 76 percent of Finnish women worked, but by 1991 this figure had dropped to 53 percent (Mahon, 2002). Something then, has gone wrong with the equality feminists' argument – the widespread provision of accessible, wide-spread, cheap, high-quality, socialised care has not led to full gender equality and before moving onto any further problems with the socialised care model in South Africa, it is necessary to understand why this is so.

While there are perhaps a number of reasons why socialised care has not resulted in economic gender parity, according to Williams (2000), one of the most significant has been the fact that women have been unwilling or unable completely to surrender their parenting responsibilities to the state. In opposition to the arguments of the equality feminists, which tended to assume that women, if given half a chance, would reject their mothering roles for ‘emancipation,’ many women have (and still do) gain satisfaction and fulfilment from their children, rather than from their work. As Rose (1990: 126) puts it: “If the familialization of society worked, it was because it both established its political legitimacy and commanded a level of subjective commitment from citizens, inciting them to regulate their own lives according to its terms.” As a consequence of this self-discipline, many women have prioritised the care of their children over the opportunity to access economic opportunities on the same level as men. Even for women who do wish to continue with successful careers after childbirth, the social approbation, guilt and anxiety (Walkerdine, 1990; Douglas and Michaels, 2004) that comes with apparently ‘abandoning’ children to full day-care is enough to ensure that many women give up, or at least limit, their careers for childcare – whether they want to or not.

In many ways much of this guilt or anxiety stems from the fact that the existential and moral discourses which have constructed Western, middle-class motherhood, while social productions, still influence very strongly a view of reality. This, in particular, is something that equality feminism has failed to realise – the conventions surrounding motherhood may be social constructions, but this does not stop motherhood itself from being very real, or very desirable, lived experience. “Discourses are true insofar as they are accepted as true,” states Woodward (1990: 65), which in turn allows people to “act as if they were true.” And because the discourses that surround motherhood are particularly compelling, and have been emphasised time and again in moral, religious, nationalist and psychoanalytic terms, undermining the position of women as mothers has been extremely difficult. Even Kate Millett (1971: 35) acknowledged that this would be so, stating that “Although there is no biological reason why the two central functions of the family (socialisation and reproduction) need to be inseparable from or even take place within it,

revolutionary or utopian efforts to remove these functions from the family have been so frustrated, so beset by difficulties, that most experiments so far have involved a gradual return to tradition.”

This “return to tradition” has certainly occurred, as was shown above, in Western countries such as Finland. Would it be any different in South Africa? It was shown in Chapter 2 that even with domestic workers (although not ideal as carers), middle-class women in South Africa still assume the majority of childcare responsibilities. Would the availability of socialised care really change that significantly? While it might ease some of the anxiety over whether children are being exposed to the necessary cognitive and emotional stimuli, it is doubtful whether it would actually stop women from assuming responsibility for childcare. The frustrated working mother who wrote into the *Mail and Guardian* (Mapetla, 28 October 2005: 15) gives an insight into this:

All the domestic help in the world does not insulate working women from having to read bedtime stories, having a meal with their families or spending an hour perched on a stool at bath-time listening to what happened at school. [It does not stop the fact] that you are immediately supposed to be emotionally available when you step through the door regardless of how long you have spent in meetings, airport delays or traffic jams. [It does not stop] some of us running ourselves ragged on the same-day flight principle – choosing to fly out and back home the same day to alleviate the family’s feeling of neglect.

While this mother is talking of domestic help, it is very probable that the same is true for socialised care. Socialised care cannot stop family commitments entirely – children come home and still need to be cared for. Thus, while it may help women to a certain extent, because it actually does little to directly challenge women’s overall responsibility for childcare, its effects are limited. As a result women will continue to be marginalized because the responsibility for childcare will continue to be their domain.

At this point it must also be mentioned that women being unwilling or morally unable to give up their caring roles is not only a feature of middle-class life. As Patricia Hill Collins (1994) has pointed out, for many women who exist outside of the dominant Western discourses, motherhood is heavily entwined with a sense of identity and pride.

‘Motherwork,’ as she calls it, is seen as something that benefits the community as a whole – as a positive way for women to influence the empowerment and solidarity of their oppressed communities and not something, therefore, that should be ‘removed’ from women (Collins, 1994). In troubled times, the voices of South African mothers have been important tools for creating social cohesion, reflected in the African proverb “you strike a woman you strike a rock, which speaks “confidently about [a mother’s] power and voice in families, communities and in the process of nation building” (Gazel and Naidoo, 2004: 1). Gaitskell (1990) has also shown how Christian Mother’s Unions or *manyanos*, have been an important source of communal solidarity during the disruptions to African life that occurred with industrialisation, urbanisation and migrant labour. Furthermore, African women place much stock in their fertility – to have children is an achievement, and entrance into womanhood, and a source of pride (Walker, 1995; Denis and Ntsimane, 2006). To argue for a form of feminist citizenship which negates the importance of motherhood, or tries to remove women from their caring role, seems inappropriate in light of the above comments.

Nevertheless, on a more practical level, socialised care could be of great help to poorer women who currently rely on extremely unsatisfactory childcare arrangements, or the large number of single mothers desperately balancing the need to work and the need to give their children adequate care. Furthermore, it has been argued that the provision of socialised care could have significant benefits for children from poor socio-economic backgrounds. This care option cannot therefore be dismissed only on the grounds stated above. In addition to these, however, there exist a number of other difficulties which could mean that arguing for socialised care is perhaps not the most appropriate way in which to give practical substance to the government’s commitment to gender equality. These are problems which relate to quality, access, and the indirect nature of the benefits of socialised care for women. This chapter will now turn to a discussion of these particular problems in more depth.

The first discussion will relate to the quality of day-care that could feasibly be provided in South Africa. Quality is important because if children are to gain any significant

benefits from socialised care it has to be of a high-standard. Children who are exposed to low-quality care tend to receive little benefit and may even suffer socially and intellectually as a result (MacKinnon and King, 1988). There are two elements to the quality of day-care – infrastructure and teaching staff (MacKinnon and King, 1988). The quality of the infrastructure will be addressed first. Quality childcare requires good quality buildings, good quality sanitary facilities, lots of room for play activities as well as a number of educational materials (MacKinnon and King, 1988; Stevens, 1997). All of these are expensive, but indispensable, if socialised care is to be advantageous to children. The question is, would the South African government be able to afford to subsidise the cost of these facilities in a widespread manner? To answer this it is first necessary to look at the existing state of early childcare in South Africa.

At present, Early Childhood Development (ECD) in South Africa receives only one percent of provincial education budgets (Seleoane, 2004). The per capita spending on ECD is approximately R309, compared to R4234 per capita spending on public schooling (Mohlala, 15 March 2005, *Mail and Guardian Online*). There is further Department of Social Development Grant which ranges between two and six Rand per child per month, but this is only paid to ECD sites that already conform to a certain infrastructural standard (Mohlala, 15 March 2005, *Mail and Guardian Online*). As a result of this lack of government spending there are a large number of ECD facilities that are of a very poor quality. Stevens (1997: 402) in a review of 32 sites in the East London area found several ECD centres “with neither electricity, indoor water, nor indoor cooking or toilet facilities,” and even found one centre that was “housed in a metal container,” and one in a “guttled bus.” Furthermore, according to Seleoane (2004), there are not enough ECD centres in South Africa to accommodate the 6 million children under the age of six – he estimates that only one million of these children have any access to ECD at all.

In order to provide widespread, high-quality socialised care, therefore, the government would have to increase spending on ECD in a dramatic fashion. Not only are many of the existing sites of a poor quality, but not enough exist to serve the majority of the children under the age of six. While it is outside the remit of this thesis to go into the financial and

economic arguments over whether the government could afford to spend the money required to raise ECD to an acceptable level, it does seem unlikely – looking at the very low levels currently spent – that the government has the necessary resources available. Furthermore, at present, the South African government is focussing its financial attention on the provision of Grade R – a reception year for children turning six (Seleoane, 2004). This is an age, Seleoane (2004) argues, when it is already too late meaningfully to intervene in the educational disadvantage which children from poor socio-economic backgrounds experience. Nevertheless it is Grade R which has become the central focus of the government's early childhood education programme and it seems the government is unlikely to change its mind on this in the near future (Evans, 7 March 2005, *Mail and Guardian Online*). As a result, arguing for socialised childcare would not only mean asking for a substantial, and perhaps unrealistic, financial commitment from the government, it would also mean asking for a significant shift in educational policy.

As stated earlier, however, it is not only the quality of the infrastructure that should be in question. Quality day-care requires highly-trained staff (MacKinnon and King, 1988). In Sweden, day-care centres are all staffed by a combination of professional teachers and professional child nurses (Hwang and Broberg, 1992). Head Start is a heavily funded programme – where highly skilled individuals are involved in the design and implementation of the educational activities that the children are exposed to (Garces *et al.*, 2002). Would we be able to ensure, even if the government increased spending on infrastructure, that ECD sites were staffed by similarly highly-qualified professionals? Once again, in order to answer this question it is necessary to look at what exists at present.

A government audit conducted in 2000, found that that out of the 54 503 ECD practitioners in South Africa, only 12 percent were fully qualified. 23 percent had no training at all, and it was found that 88 percent required further training (Evans, 7 March 2005, *Mail and Guardian Online*). Thus it would seem that if socialised care centres in South Africa were to be staffed by highly trained professionals there would have to be a concerted, and expensive, drive by the state to re-train existing practitioners and ensure

that those entering the profession were receiving adequate training. However, even with training it is doubtful that there are enough people, who have attained a high enough level of education themselves, to provide a significant number of children with the educational stimuli they require. It was stated earlier in this chapter that in some provinces illiteracy rates for adults reach 75 percent (Seleoane, 2004). Furthermore, South Africa is a country with a large number of poorly educated and unskilled people – according to the World Bank (2006), only six percent of South Africans above the age of 20 have completed any tertiary education. Evidence of this is the huge skills shortage the country is currently experiencing – 30 percent of senior civil service posts stand empty and there is a “shortfall of one in three senior managers in the public sector” (Robinson *et al.*, 2 August 2005, *Mail and Guardian Online*). If high-quality day-care requires trained professionals – skilled workers – who themselves have attained a high level of education, then it would seem that widespread high-quality socialised childcare may not be realistically feasible in South Africa – in the near future at least.

Thus it appears that the issue of quality is a difficult one – if socialised care is only really advantageous for children if centres have the materials they need, and staff who are highly trained, then it is questionable whether the socialised care that the South African state could feasibly provide, would be of any real benefit to children. But even if this were not the case, even if it is possible for the government to come up with the necessary funding and the manpower, there are still more potential pitfalls. The next section will look at the problem of access.

Biersteker and Vale (2003) have pointed out that one of the biggest problems facing ECD in South Africa is the fact that often the children who would benefit from it the most are unable to access it. There appear to be two reasons for this. Firstly, as highlighted by Biersteker and Vale (2003), many poor children, from a very young age, are required to help with household duties or even earn money. Berry and Guthrie (2003), for example, state that many children spend a significant amount of time each day fetching and carrying firewood and water. If this is the case then it is clear that many of these children would be prevented, due to time-constraints and the need for their labour, from attending

any socialised care programmes. This is particularly so with girl-children, who tend to be heavily involved with household chores (Berry and Guthrie, 2003). Thus the provision of socialised care may even engender a greater gender gap if more boys, due to a lower demand for their labour, are able to attend early education classes, while girls are prevented from doing so.

Secondly, even if socialised childcare for children under the age of six was provided at every public school in the country, a significant number of children would be prevented from accessing it for the simple fact that it would be too far away. In the Eastern Cape, for example, it is estimated that more than 11 000 children spend over two hours each day walking to school, and in KwaZulu-Natal this figure rises to 250 000 children (Cull, 19 September 2005, *Eastern Cape Herald*: 6). It is unlikely that children under the age of 6 would be able to manage these long distances and in order to ensure that all children had access to socialised care, the government would either have to ensure that a safe and reliable form of transport existed, or would have to build facilities in a number of areas where schools are not accessible. If the government could do this – as well as ensure that the facilities were of a high standard, it would of course be ideal. Once again, however, this is a very expensive proposition and one that is unlikely to come to fruition in the near future.

Of course, it could still be argued that socialised care could be advantageous to women – the problems of quality and access relate more to the argument that socialised care is beneficial to children. Even, then, however, there is one significant argument that could be used against the prioritisation of socialised care as a feminist strategy. This argument relates to the fact that socialised care is really only advantageous to working women. In Sweden, for example, socialised care only became a national priority once it was necessary, due to labour force demand, to facilitate the entrance of large numbers of women into the workforce (Lamb and Sternberg, 1992). In South Africa this need does not exist. In fact, quite the opposite – South African women face huge unemployment statistics – in some parts of South Africa, up to 75 percent of women are unemployed (Hassim, 2005). In this case, the question must be asked – what real benefits would

socialised care be able to provide these unemployed women with? For them there are no work/family conflicts, they are not juggling the time constraints of childcare with the need to earn a living. Socialised care is only helpful when there are jobs to access and in South Africa those jobs, for many women, do not exist. As a result it can do little to directly improve the lives – or the economic position – of South African women. But directly improving women’s lives should be the main goal of any feminist citizenship – and in particular, one that is also seeking to improve the lives of children. In order to understand why, it is necessary to look at the argument put forward by Linda Richter (2004).

Richter (2004) argues that while socialised or institutionalised care facilities can provide children with a certain amount of the care that they require, the basic fact remains that children need to experience, particularly when they are very young, the emotional warmth of a primary care-giver. Even in places like Sweden this is recognised by policies which allow women to take employment leaves for up to 18 months in order to bond with their young infants (Hwang and Broberg, 1992). In particular, however, it is children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, or ones suffering from HIV/AIDS who, require, perhaps even more than other children, positive and warm interactions with their care-givers. According to Richter (2004: 41): “...anyone working in a malnutrition or HIV/AIDS ward in a poor country sees children dying because of pathological withdrawal even today. Yet, as I and others have seen, time and again, when children have positive relationships with caregivers, they seem able to endure quite wretched conditions with apparently few adverse effects.”

However, as Richter (2004) goes on to argue, women who are facing economic insecurity and hunger are less likely to be able to provide their children (or any children they are primarily responsible for) with these positive interactions. This is often because they are depressed or experiencing chronic stress and anxiety, which causes them to withdraw emotionally from their children. As a result, no matter how much time they spend in institutionalised care, these children tend to suffer. As Richter (2004: 42) argues: “external agencies and individuals may provide material and psycho-social care.

However, the care is often unsustainable, and, more importantly, does not address the child's primary need to be in stable relationships with others." What is really needed in terms state assistance for families, Richter (2004) therefore argues, is not socialised care, but policies that directly allow for 1) the strengthening of relationships between primary care-givers and children and 2) providing care-givers with the support that they need to care adequately their for children. In order to do this, it is clearly necessary that direct steps are taken to ensure that women themselves are not weighed down by economic insecurity and the stress and anxiety that often accompanies it.

Three main points have now been made clear in this chapter. Firstly, in opposition to the arguments of the equality feminists, women do not all want to 'remove' themselves from motherhood – motherhood is a source of joy and potentially a source of empowerment for many women. Secondly, while the provision of high-quality socialised care does have benefits for children, it is doubtful whether the government, due to both a lack of resources and skilled childcare workers, could provide the necessary levels of quality care. It is also doubtful whether the children who most need it, would be able to access these care centres. Lastly, it was argued that socialised care is of little benefit to the large numbers unemployed South African women. While socialised care may help women to juggle their work/family commitments, it does not create jobs nor does it offer direct financial assistance. This not only means that many women are left in a similar position of economic insecurity, it also means that the care children receive and need from their primary care-givers is still compromised. In line with all of the above comments, it appears that socialised care is perhaps not the most appropriate feminist strategy in South African terms.

It would perhaps make more sense, then, in line with Richter's (2004) argument, to empower women to care for their children in a 'better' way. This will be the focus of the next chapter, which will examine in greater depth the arguments of the difference feminists who have provided the most extensive critique of equality feminism and who have, in terms of policy, emphasised the importance of state-support for mothers caring for children in the home.

Chapter 5

In the previous chapter it was concluded that socialised care, for a number of contextual reasons, should not be prioritised as the most appropriate form of childcare support for South African women. It was further argued that, in line with Richter (2004), it would be more appropriate to argue for an intervention that could have a more direct economic impact on the lives of mothers or other primary care-givers. This, it was argued, would not only ensure a better life for women, but also for their children, who are in need of positive, warm, stable care-giver interactions – interactions, Richter (2004) maintains, which cannot be fully provided for in institutionalised settings and which can only be facilitated when the primary care-giver is in an economically secure position. This chapter will take up this argument in more detail by discussing the potential merits of what Mahon (2002) has termed the ‘neofamilialist’ model of childcare support.

This ‘neofamilialist’ model has been adopted by a number of European countries including Finland, France, Austria, Germany and Norway (Mahon, 2002; Morgan and Zippel, 2003). Essentially it is a state-based childcare intervention which attempts to provide public support for childcare that is carried out in the private sphere. A key feature of this is the provision of a caring wage, which is paid to carers (the vast majority of whom are women), until the child is of an age where mother care is deemed less crucial – in Finland, for example, it is paid to carers with children under the age of 3 (Mahon, 2002; Morgan and Zippel, 2003; Bergman, 2004). Rather than attempting to remove motherhood from women, then, these policies have been designed to entrench women’s position as carers through the provision of financial incentives.

At first glance this might seem like a traditionalist ploy to maintain the social status quo. According to Morgan and Zippel (2003), for example, neofamilialist policies have found widespread support from the conservative and centre-right elements of European society. At the same time, however, neofamilialist policies have, perhaps paradoxically, been vehemently supported by ‘difference’ (also known as maternalist, relational or social – Offen, 1998) feminists, who argue that neofamilialism, rather than being about preserving

the status quo, is actually part of a more radical societal shift which has begun to realise the importance of care and women's role within it (Bergman, 2004). This is evidenced, according to these feminists, by the fact that while the model seeks to entrench women's position as carers, it does not expect women to continue to care in an unpaid capacity (Bergman, 2004). It is, therefore, about attempting to ensure that women do not lack access to economic security because they care. Unlike the equality feminists then, 'difference' feminists, in theory, have not accepted the fact that care and economic marginalisation are inextricably entwined. Rather, they argue, care is a vital part of human existence that has been much neglected by society (not least by equality feminists) and that it is time that it is afforded the respect it deserves (Grimshaw, 1986).

This position is largely the reason for the 'difference' in 'difference' feminism. These are feminists who argue that women can never be included in the definition of the citizen, largely because to be a citizen means that responsibility for care needs to be disavowed. But, as shown in the previous chapter, women are not in the position to disavow care – whether it is a social construction or not, women do feel inextricably connected to their children, or are made to feel guilty if they are not. They are, therefore, different from men, and if women are ever to be included as citizens, this difference needs to be accounted for (Young, 1989). If it is motherhood which largely defines women and if it is motherhood which has traditionally excluded women from their rights to citizenship, difference feminists argue, then it is the concept of citizenship which needs to change, because women will never be able to remove themselves from care. Neofamilialism, which attempts to assign monetary value to the work involved in care-giving, is, according to this line of thought, the first step in the right direction.

In order to fully understand why difference feminists have placed so much emphasis on care and the notion of differentiated citizenship, however, a deeper understanding of their basic principles is necessary. The next section will therefore be devoted to a more in depth theoretical discussion of difference feminism, and will also look more closely at the nature of their disagreement with the equality feminists. Without this discussion it is impossible to fully realise why neofamilialism is a strategy that can be considered

feminist, rather than traditionalist, and what benefits it might therefore have for South African women.

There are two major theoretical suppositions which underlie difference feminism. The first of these is that there are essential qualities that divide the world into either masculine or feminine outlooks (Lister, 1997). A feminine outlook, difference feminists suggest, is characterised largely by the caring and nurturing qualities which arise from women's role as primary care-givers. Sara Ruddick (1995), for example, has argued that this role has led to a particular type of "maternal thinking" in women – a kind of thinking which is centred on qualities such as preserving life, growth and acceptance, which she argues do not exist so explicitly in the masculine world. Carol Gilligan (1977) has added further impetus to this view with her studies on the "ethic of care." Gilligan began her studies in response to Kohlberg's findings that women were less advanced in their moral thinking than men (Tronto, 1987). She found, however, that women were not 'less advanced,' but rather that they expressed their moral reasoning in a very different way. Women, Gilligan (1977) argued, expressed their morality not in terms of masculine notions of 'abstract justice,' but rather in terms of concrete caring relationships and therefore exhibited what she termed an 'ethic of care' (Gilligan, 1977). This ethic was focused less on the articulation of rights and rules and more on the interrelationships between people and an acknowledgement of dependence on and by others (Tronto, 1987). While neither Gilligan nor Ruddick have claimed that a feminine worldview, or caring ethic, is strictly limited to women – Ruddick (1995), for example, has claimed that men can mother too – the fact that they have sharply divided the world into masculine and feminine ethics, rather than using more gender-neutral terms, has tended to place men on one side of the spectrum and women on the other (Tronto, 1987; Dietz, 1992).

The second basic premise of difference feminism is that citizenship of the liberal state has been structured on a masculine, rather than a feminine ethic. In fact, according to Lister (1997), the very idea of 'the citizen' is based on the patriarchal exclusion of all that is associated with the feminine – and this includes care and nurture. 'The citizen', as Lister (1997) explains, is based on the ideals of independence, rationality and strength. Women,

associated with the ethics of care and nurturance, but also with dependence cannot, in this scheme of things, ever be fully respected citizens. This is because to become a citizen, as ‘the citizen’ is currently conceptualised, means that women have to disavow the feminine and “become (like) men” (Pateman, 1992: 20).

While this critique of liberal citizenship is also recognised by some equality feminists – mainly the radicals – their solution has been to argue that women do not necessarily have to conform to the feminine stereotype – that women can also be rational, independent individuals. This, of course, runs very much against the grain of difference feminism’s characterisation of masculine and feminine ethics and they argue that the position of these equality feminists is contradictory and incoherent. To aspire towards the ideal of the rational, independent individual, is to aspire towards a masculine ethic “that places reason above emotion, mind over body, and culture above nature,” and which implies “that it is only by denying her female-ness that a woman can achieve humanity” (Bryson, 1992: 154). They argue, then, that equality feminists, while critiquing patriarchy, paradoxically fall into the trap of accepting patriarchal values. This, they claim, will never result in true equality for women. In fact it does quite the opposite, because in attempting to make women into men, and thereby denying the social importance of feminine ethics such as care, equality feminism has only deepened the exploitation of women who, due to necessity or social pressure, continue to assume the bulk of the responsibility for it. As Williams (2000: 54) puts it: “We have changed from a society that formally delegates to women the care of children, the sick, and the elderly to a society that pretends those groups do not exist. The result, to women’s credit, is that women still do the care-giving. But they pay a stiff price for doing so.”

To difference feminists, the only way around this trap is to gain acceptance of the importance of a feminine ethic and to include this ethic in the definition of the citizen. Citizenship, therefore, has to be differentiated, and motherhood, which characterises all that is feminine and all that has traditionally been excluded from the masculine public ethic, should become the basis on which women should be included as citizens (Dietz,

1992). It is only through this acknowledgment of women's difference to men, these feminists argue, that women will ever find equality.

Important to recognise in this argument is that much of the difference feminist argument is not necessarily about making care a public phenomenon. Care should be recognised publicly, according to these feminists, but the physical act of care-giving should not necessarily be carried out in public. The reason for this position is that many difference feminists who are strongly maternalist in outlook, view the public (masculine) world as immoral and therefore not the ideal place for care-giving to take place. Jean Bethke Elshtain (1982), for example, claims that since the time of the medieval political philosophers Bodin and Machiavelli the public sphere, which she points out has excluded women since the time of Aristotle, has been divorced from morality. Politics (the public sphere) was about efficacy – “a good prince” according to Machiavelli “was one who delivered the goods,” one who was able to use force to impose his will, and not one who could, therefore be subject to moral qualms (Elshtain, 1982: 55). The feminine ethic of care and nurturance which pervades the private sphere however, has meant that this sphere still maintains the moral environment which is suitable to the raising of children. Elshtain (1982) therefore vehemently opposes the equality feminist's attempt to break down the public/private divide by moving childcare into the public sphere, fearing that this will not only compromise the morality that exists in the private sphere, but will also compromise the care that children receive (Stacey, 1983). Rather, she argues, what is necessary is that the private, the subordinated partner in the public/private binary, be strengthened – be made of equal status and worth to the public, and even at some later stage, allow the morality that exists in this sphere to infuse the public sphere – for the feminine to overcome the masculine – to create what she terms an “ethical polity” (Stacey, 1983: 567).

Thus it becomes very clear why the neofamilialist model is so strongly supported by difference feminists. Not only does it attempt to value care work financially, but it also strengthens the private sphere and makes it seem, theoretically at least, that it is equally worthy to remain at home to care for children as it is to move out into the workforce. And

it is perhaps for this reason that both the neofamilialist model and difference feminism have become increasingly popular both with women and feminists involved in state lobbying. Difference feminism allows women to believe that staying at home and caring for their children – something many women obviously feel compelled towards – does not mean that they “are still trapped in the old ways and not sufficiently enlightened even to perceive the depths of their own degradation and dehumanisation,” or that because they have devoted their lives to their children, they “have done nothing of value, nothing which can be fully seen as ‘human,’ and nothing which they would have chosen to do of their own free will” (Grimshaw, 1986: 159). As a consequence of this, difference feminism has resonated strongly with the large numbers of women who, having decided to frame their lives around care and their families, have traditionally felt excluded by equality feminism (Williams, 2000). It also resonates with the increasing number of women who have decided to give up juggling employment responsibilities with care responsibilities and remain home with their children, no matter the damage that this ‘lack of work commitment’ does to their careers.

This resonance that difference feminism has had with many women is evident in the way that feminist groups in countries with strong feminist histories – Finland, in particular – have changed their family policy demands (Bergman, 2004). While Finland once had the highest rate of female employment in the world and an enviable socialised care network, today these ‘equality’ policies have been firmly eroded by the neofamilialist model, the implementation of which has been strongly supported by many Finnish feminist groups (Mahon, 2002; Bergman, 2004). In order to understand whether South African feminists should follow the lead of their Finnish counterparts, however, it is first necessary to look more closely at what the neofamilialist model entails. The next section will therefore briefly examine some of the components of the neofamilialist model and then move on to discuss the applicability of this model in the South African context.

It was stated earlier that a key element of the neofamilialist model is the provision of a caring wage. While this is perhaps, for reasons that will be explained shortly, the most applicable aspect of the model in South Africa, there are a number of other policies that

accompany the wage that should be acknowledged. The first of these is tax breaks, or an equivalent allowance, for parents wishing to purchase childcare help in the home. In France legislation allowing for this has been in place since 1986 (Mahon, 2002). The second is the allowance for generous parental employment leaves for primary care-givers which, in some cases, last for 3 to 4 years – with a guarantee of re-employment after the leave period is up (Mahon, 2002). Having now acknowledged these, it is possible to turn to a discussion of neofamilialism in the South African context.

Neofamilialism in South Africa: A Critical Evaluation

It was stated above that the provision of a caring wage would perhaps be the most appropriate aspect of the neofamilialist model in South Africa. The reason for this is that the provision of direct income support grants is already a major part of the government's social development policy. These grants include the Child Support Grant (CSG), Foster Care Grant, Disability Grant as well as the Old Age Pensions (Zuma *et al.*, 2005). According to the *Mail and Guardian Online* (Sapa, 2 March 2005), by the time the CSG has extended to all children under the age of 14, approximately 12 million South Africans will be receiving government grants. The South African Treasury estimated that, at the start of 2003, “67 percent of the income of the poorest 20 percent of the population came from social grants” (Sapa, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 2 March 2005). Furthermore, recent, although controversial, research conducted by economists at Stellenbosch University, found that these income grants had had a significant impact on poverty levels for the better (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6). The researchers, using a poverty datum line of R3000 per capita per year, found that while “the number of poor people rose from 16 million in 1993 to 18.5 million in 2000,” this figure had dropped sharply by 2005 to 15 million (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6). The researchers attributed this drop, in part, to the expansion of the social grant system (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6).

It could therefore be argued that the provision of a caring wage to primary care-givers could bring down these poverty levels even further and, following Richter's (2004) argument, would, in reducing their levels of economic insecurity and the anxiety and

stress that often accompanies this, allow them to provide their children with more stable and warm caring interactions. Importantly too, the provision of a caring wage could potentially address one of the more serious criticisms levelled against the CSG, which argues that in providing financial support for the child, the needs of the care-giver are neglected (Naidoo and Bozalek, 1997). Thus instead of playing the rights of the child off against the rights of the care-giver, the provision of a caring wage with the CSG, would account for the needs of both parties.

Of course, in line with the rest of South Africa's social grant policies, the caring wage, in realistic terms, would probably be a means-tested grant, meaning that only the poorest women would be eligible to receive it. While this is certainly important anyway, it does tend to exclude the large number of women who are employed and need assistance with work/family conflict. The solution here might be to implement the long care leave policies. What may be more appropriate, however, taking into account the number of domestic workers that are employed in this country, would be to institute the policies allowing tax-breaks for parents wishing to purchase private childcare assistance. This could be particularly advantageous because these policies may have the potential not only to aid the families employing domestic workers, but may actually help domestic workers themselves. In 2001 the Department of Labour published a set of minimum wages for domestic workers in an attempt to regularise the sector. However, as Mills (2002) has argued, these minimum wages have been set at very low levels – barely above the poverty datum line. The rationale behind this low minimum wage was the very real concern that many families would be unable (or unwilling) to continue employing domestic workers if the wage was set too high, leaving these women in an even more serious financial predicament (Mills, 2002). However, if the government put in place measures to actively assist these families with their domestic help costs, this rationale would to some extent fall away. While a direct financial grant (such as that paid in France) would be ideal, in South Africa, where this is unlikely to happen, tax breaks where the salary paid to the domestic worker is made tax deductible, might be an effective way of indirectly increasing domestic worker's salaries – the knock-on effects of which would, hopefully, be felt by their families and children.

It would appear, then, that in terms of attempting to conceptualise a form of citizenship that fully includes women, the neofamilialist model is, in some ways, appropriate in the South African context. However, as several authors (Stacey, 1983; Dietz, 1985; Bryson, 1992; Morgan and Zippel, 2003) have noted, this model, and, in particular, the feminist rationale behind it, holds some serious drawbacks for women. This chapter will now turn to a critical evaluation of the difference feminist argument, which will lead into a discussion of some of the major practical pitfalls the neofamilialist model might have for South African women.

Perhaps most importantly, the major failing of difference feminism as both Dietz (1985; 1992) and Bryson (1992) have argued, is that it includes women as citizens *only* in terms of their caring roles. This assumes that the central attribute of womanhood lies in women's caring role, which fails to recognise that not all women wish to, or even gain any satisfaction out of, dedicating their lives to this. As Lister (1997: 176) argues "women's various interests and identities *qua* women cannot be subsumed under one interest and identity of motherhood." In essentialising all women as carers, difference feminism fails to recognise the voices of those women who gain satisfaction and self-esteem out of engaging in more 'masculine' pursuits, such as a successful career, yet still see themselves as fully feminine (Dietz, 1992).

Linked to this is the further difficulty that in proposing a society which unquestioningly accepts the ideology that children are better off cared for by their own mothers, difference feminism narrows the life choices (or at least makes them much harder) for those women who do not feel able to lead fulfilled lives as full-time mothers. As shown in previous chapters, these women already often suffer heavily from the feelings of guilt and anxiety that are perpetuated by a society which emphasises mother-care above all else (see Douglas and Michaels, 2004). By further entrenching the idea of childcare as being the sole responsibility of women are we not just placing even more pressure on these women – women who, like the frustrated working mother quoted in Chapters 2 and 3, are desperately trying to juggle the sense of self-worth they get from their careers, with the social pressures on them to care for their children? Are we not just setting up these

women, who have every right to enjoy a successful career, who have every right to experience the “knowledge of the world” and the “feelings of independence and competence” that Polatnick (1983: 24) argues comes with work experience, to be labelled as ‘bad mothers,’ who have no time for their children? Furthermore, are these mothers, suffering from anxiety, stress and perhaps even boredom after giving up their jobs, going to be ‘better’ mothers? According to Richter’s (2004) argument, probably not. But perhaps even more worrying, are we not just stepping back 50 years and returning to a society where women were unable to participate in the public sphere at all – a status quo that may have been convenient for men, but which many women found frustrating and demeaning?

These questions in particular lead onto another major criticism of difference feminism. That is that its insistence on essentially different masculine and feminine traits sits uncomfortably close to the pseudo-naturalist arguments that conservatives and anti-feminists have for years used to keep women out of the public sphere. Iris Marion Young (1989: 267) has defended the need for this differentiation by arguing that insisting on blind equality for all is outdated in an age where there is widespread acceptance that all people, regardless of colour, gender or ethnicity, deserve equal rights and are of “equal moral worth.” She argues that without acknowledging “the particular differences of group affiliation, situation and interest,” an homogeneity of political interest, which is still defined largely in terms of its white male ethic, is imposed and in doing so it excludes those who are ‘different’ – women, ethnic and racial minorities etc – from the dominant political discourse and therefore perpetuates the cycles of oppression and disadvantage that these social groups face (Young, 1989: 251). Nevertheless, “many modern feminists are...extremely wary of alleging any natural differences in aptitude or moral outlook between the sexes, fearing that in a patriarchal society this will always be used to the detriment of women” (Bryson, 1992: 209). And, despite Young’s argument, this is a very important point – we live in a patriarchal society – that is our reality, and while it is useful to try and critically engage with that world, using pseudo-naturalist arguments to try and find a common ground for feminine identity is a dangerous game to play.

This criticism, in particular, has seemingly been validated by the actual position of women in the countries which have instituted neofamilialist policies. Morgan and Zippel (2003), for example, have argued that the caring wage has done very little to alleviate women's marginalisation. It has facilitated the exit of women from the workforce – as stated in Chapter 3, Finnish women's employment fell from 76 percent in 1985 to 53 percent in 1991 (Bergman, 2004). In France it has fallen by 18 percent since the implementation of the caring wage in 1994 (the first time, according to Morgan and Zippel (2003), that this has happened since the 1970s). What is really problematic with this, however, is that the wage in most of these countries is barely enough to live on without any other form of financial support. Furthermore, as Morgan and Zippel (2003) argue, mounting evidence from these countries has pointed to the fact that women attempting to return to work after the long care leaves are generally finding themselves in poorly paid, part-time or temporary work. In large part, then, the wage has been less successful in valuing women's care work and more successful in reinforcing women's dependence on a male breadwinner (Morgan and Zippel, 2003).

In South Africa this exit of women from the workforce that appears to accompany the provision of a caring wage may have potentially disastrous effects. While it is true that many women confront high levels of unemployment anyway, and that some form of caring grant may therefore be able to alleviate some of the poverty these women face, it is also true that grants such as these are likely to be very low in value and come to an end when the child reaches a certain age – which essentially leaves women, after their children are grown in a similarly precarious position to the one they currently occupy. This is particularly so with those mothers who do not have a male breadwinner to rely on – which, in South Africa, as shown in Chapter 2, is a high proportion of women. This all points to one of the major problems with relying on social grants for poverty alleviation – they can only do so much. Financial constraints, particularly in countries such as South Africa, will always keep the value of social grants low. They are, therefore, more of a net to catch people from falling into absolute poverty, rather than actually lifting people out of poverty altogether (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6).

Recognising this fact, Natrass and Seekings (1997) have argued that the only really effective way to extend social citizenship rights to the majority of those who have previously been disenfranchised – such as women – is to institute wide ranging public works programmes, where people are able to access their economic opportunities through government sponsored employment, rather than relying on direct income support. This point has also been recognised by the researchers from Stellenbosch University mentioned earlier, who, having argued that social grants have made a considerable dent in the levels of poverty, have also argued that public works programmes are necessary to allow this trend to continue in a significant manner (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6). The Stellenbosch study found, using a scenario modelling technique, that if an additional one million jobs were created by the South African government, 300 000 households would effectively be lifted out of poverty, “reducing the proportion of the population that is poor by two point six percentage points” (Joffe, *Business Day*, 16 January 2006: 6).

Most importantly, however, it is also the South African government who has recognised the poverty alleviation potential of a public works programme and in line with this, have decided to cap growth of social grant spending, and focus instead on what it has termed the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), launched in 2003 (Sapa, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 2 March 2005). The EPWP, with a budget of R20 billion, is expected to create a million jobs by 2008 and promote further skills development through the linkage of skills training to EPWP jobs (Haffajee, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 14 November 2003).

It is here, then, that the most obvious problem with the neofamilialist model becomes evident. If public works programmes, which allow people access to economic opportunities through employment, are the only way to truly relieve poverty, it seems extremely problematic to propose a feminist policy that, in all the other countries it has been implemented in, has kept women *out* of employment. While the provision of a caring wage may keep women from the absolute poverty line, in order for them to really feel (and be) economically secure, it is surely necessary, taking into account the above

arguments, to facilitate an environment where women can access the opportunities that have the potential to permanently lift them out of poverty. Otherwise are we not just creating a society where women are concentrated, if not on the lowest, on the lower rungs of the socio-economic spectrum, with little hope of raising themselves? Here once again, the flaws in the difference feminist's argument become apparent – whether we like it or not, we do live in a world where access to employment opportunities is the surest way to economic self-sufficiency. And unless we get to a stage where a caring wage would be of equal value to a good working salary, would be allocated for life, and would be available to all care-givers, a caring wage can do little but act as a symbolic gesture which, in the end, only reinforces the status quo and women's marginal social position (Morgan and Zippel, 2003). “Cash payments to those who stay at home to care for children...run the risk of weakening women's position in the labour market in the long term. In these instances, policies that value difference threaten to do so at the expense of equality” (Lister, 1997: 201).

Perhaps even more dangerous, however, is the fact that the provision of a caring wage is, according to Morgan and Zippel (2003), a way for governments, battling high unemployment, to keep the demand for jobs lower by pushing women out of the job market. Several European governments have used the caring wage in this way (Morgan and Zippel, 2003), and it is quite possible that if such a wage did become a reality, the South African government could use it to keep women out of programmes like the EPWP, as well as the wider job market. Already the government is prone to hedging its (high) unemployment figures in order to boost its credibility, and keeping women out of the job market would be a very convenient way in which to decrease the 'official' or 'unexpanded' unemployment rate (Brown, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 11 November, 2005). These 'official' employment figures represent those who are looking for work, but cannot find it. The 'expanded' figures represent all of those unemployed, including those who have given up looking for work (Brown, *Mail and Guardian Online*, 11 November 2005). Thus the official unemployment figures, because they do not include those who have given up looking for work, are significantly lower than the expanded rates, which give a much more accurate picture of actual unemployment. It is quite obvious, then, that

if a caring wage, which kept women from seeking employment existed, the official unemployment rates would decrease even further, thus giving the government's image a further boost. The implications of this could leave South African women in a far worse position than they currently occupy – with a government actively seeking to dissuade them from participation in the labour market (and justifying this with the caring wage), women could find it even more difficult to re-enter employment after either childcare leaves or after the caring wage period was over.

It is not just in terms of unemployment figures that the caring wage could let the government 'off the hook,' however. It would also allow the government to get away with doing very little to actively ensure that children are provided with the best care possible. This is because, in unquestioningly assuming that women should be fully responsible for childcare, the neofamilialist model, like the government's current family policy (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003), does little to engage with the contextual constraints that limit women's ability to care adequately. These are constraints which cannot simply be solved through a small cash grant – they are linked to the lack of parental education highlighted in the previous chapter, as well as the lack of adequate and accessible educational and health facilities (see, for example, Allan *et al.*, 2004). In the absence of these, no matter how stable and loving their relationships are, it is impossible for women to give children the care that they need. This is also true of policies allowing for tax breaks for families employing domestic workers. While tax breaks may relieve some of the financial burden, they do little to address the fact that many domestic workers are poorly educated and cannot provide children with the high quality care that should be a basic right.

So this model is, after all, not the ideal fit. Neither is the equality model, however. Both models have severe shortcomings both philosophically and practically – equality feminism unquestioningly accepts the primacy of the individual over other ontological positions, while difference feminism, in attempting to correct that, makes the mistake of essentialising women and men into their pseudo-biological stereotypes. In terms of policy, the neofamilialist model does little to effectively challenge the position of women

– the philosophy behind it might be radical, but its practical results have been far from it. Rather, as Morgan and Zippel (2003) have argued, this model has further entrenched women’s economic marginalisation through facilitating their exit from the workforce. This, it was argued, would be particularly detrimental in South Africa, where access to employment opportunities is the only real hope women have of ending their economic marginalisation. Furthermore, it fails to take into account the contextual factors which limit the ability of women to provide adequate care for their children, thus perpetuating cycles of poverty. However, the equality feminist argument for the provision of socialised care, which, in theory, should be able to address some of the issues associated with the neofamilialist model, is also problematic. This is because, firstly, socialised care is difficult to ‘get right’ in countries such as South Africa, with few financial and human resources. Secondly, socialised care does little to actively improve the lives of the many unemployed women in this country. This vision of women’s citizenship is also problematic because it falls into the trap of devaluing care work. A society which does nothing to value the role of care and those who do the caring, and measures success purely through achievement at work, is a society that inevitably marginalizes women, and will, therefore, always marginalise children.

All of this, however, does not mean that there is no answer to the question of how women’s access to the full rights of citizenship might be facilitated in the South African context. There are ways in which this can be done, that, instead of polarising the debate and the accompanying policies, takes the elements of both sides of the debate and attempts to synthesise them appropriately. The subject of the concluding chapter will be on how this synthesis might be achieved in practical terms.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This thesis has, up to this point, completed two out of its three main tasks. Firstly, it has identified that a disjuncture exists between the South African government's theoretical commitment to gender equality and the content of the policies that should be able to give this practical effect. On the one hand the thesis has shown that there is a theoretical understanding, articulated in legal documents such as the Constitution, that expanded notions of citizenship, which are necessary in order to allow those previously disadvantaged access to full citizenship, need to interact with substantive commitments to gender equality if this expanded notion of citizenship is to include women. On the other hand, however, important policy documents that should translate this understanding into practical action, such as the *White Paper for Social Welfare* (1996), do not, in any meaningful way, challenge the social norms that dictate that women are, in the liberal state, relegated to second class citizenship (Sevenhuijsen *et al.*, 2003). In particular, the thesis has argued, the government's seeming inability to deal appropriately with women's unequal responsibility for childcare is a major failing of South African social policy. This failing, it was then shown, has contributed in no insignificant way to women's economic marginalisation, as well as to their reliance on inappropriate childcare solutions which, it was argued, will do little but perpetuate the cycles of poverty, disadvantage and inequality that currently beset South African society.

Secondly, the thesis has attempted to engender some debate as to what role the South African state could, in attempting to give effect to its commitment to substantive gender equality, play in providing childcare support. This was done through considering the appropriateness of, as well as the feminist rationales behind, the two major options that have dominated state childcare policy in Western liberal democracies – socialised care and the neofamilialist model. In doing so, the thesis has shown that in countries like South Africa the concerns surrounding childcare policy are particularly sensitive and complex. This has meant that neither of the core policy options discussed have been considered completely suitable. The third major objective of this thesis, then, is to suggest childcare policies that have the potential directly to impact on the lives of South

African women and children for the better. A discussion of this last objective is the main purpose of the present chapter. Before moving on with this, however, it is first necessary to make some concluding comments about the feminist theories which have been used as a theoretical base from which to launch the policy discussions, as well as on the nature of childcare policy itself.

In terms of feminist political theory, it is becoming widely acknowledged by contemporary feminists (see Lister, 1997 and Williams, 2000), that the traditional theory – split as it is between the advocates of ‘difference’ and ‘equality’ – is both too rigid and too exclusionary. It is too exclusionary because each side of the feminist debate reduces women’s claim to the full rights of citizenship either to a role based almost exclusively on employment, what Lister (1997) has termed the “citizen- the worker” ideal, or to a role based almost exclusively on care, or the “citizen-the carer” ideal (Lister, 1997). These reductions either exclude those women who frame their lives around care – thereby devaluing the contribution these women have made to society through their care work, or they exclude those women who do not feel fulfilled, or do not have the luxury of being full-time care-givers. Furthermore, the ‘citizen-the carer’ ideal, in its rejection of the public sphere, dangerously engenders a society where many women are reliant on low-value, state subsidies for economic survival.

Perhaps it is feminist political theory’s rigidity, however, which is its greatest problem. Feminism’s rigid categorization of women either as workers *or* carers has meant that both sides of the debate have failed to acknowledge the complex and fluid nuances of the lives, desires and needs that are framed and affected by and around care-giving. It fails to realise that, while there are women who exist on either end of the extremes – some women do completely give up work for care, and some women do reject motherhood for work related reasons – many women – and perhaps most women – exist between these extremes, in a changing and flexible manner either out of choice or necessity, as both citizen-workers and citizen-carers (Lister, 1997). Feminist policy recommendations which do not take into account the dynamic and complex nature of this relationship between caring and earning – a relationship which sees many women, at different times

in their lives, assume different roles and different priorities – run the risk of not only excluding women and alienating them from the feminist cause, but also, because they do not reflect the lived reality of many of the women they are purporting to represent, are likely to have a very limited impact at best (Lister, 1997; Williams, 2000).

In terms of actual childcare policy, it must, at this point, also be emphasised that policies which do not recognise the particular exigencies of the society for which they are intended, are likely to fail in a similar manner. This fact has, hopefully, been demonstrated in the last two chapters of this thesis. The ideal of cheap, high-quality, widespread socialised care, for example, is one that, because of the very real benefits it would have for children at least, should be fought for. At the same time, however, it must also be recognised that in a country like South Africa, with a low skills base and limited material resources, it is not appropriate to base childcare policy – and particularly policy that is seeking to make an immediate impact – solely on this ideal, simply because it is more of an ideal than something which is likely to be given practical effect in the near future. Similarly, in a country that is proposing to base its poverty alleviation strategy on a public works programme – which requires active participation in the public sphere – it is equally inappropriate to suggest a childcare policy which tends to keep women confined to the private sphere. Instead of unquestioningly assuming that policies which have been designed around and for the needs of wealthier European societies, will work equally well in South Africa, we should rather be attempting to craft a set of policies that are sensitive to the particular dynamics of our society. Without this recognition no childcare policy is likely to have its desired effect.

Taking into account the above comments, what policies should we then be looking to promote? Firstly, following on from the criticisms of feminist theory discussed above, it would make sense to ensure that policies take into account the fact that care is an integral part of human existence and should be valued rather than marginalized. This then recognises and attempts to value the unique contribution women have made to society through their care work, and seeks to include carers as fully recognised citizens. At the same time, however, policies also need to recognise that access to employment is, in

today's society at least, and because of the economic independence it brings, the surest way to end women's (and children's) marginalisation. After all, in a world dominated by money, it is really only when carers reach economic parity with those who are not primarily involved in care work, that we can truly say we are valuing care – and the only way to reach this economic parity, this thesis has concluded, is to allow women equal access to employment opportunities. Even further, as Lister (1997) has argued, unless carers become part of the public sphere, thereby forcing wider society to recognise their particular needs, there is little hope that the social value placed on care will increase in any significant manner.

Policies based on this theoretical synthesis would therefore acknowledge the validity, as well as the flaws, of the arguments from both sides of the feminist debate and, as a result, would seek a compromise that reflects the fact that women can be, and generally are, both carers and earners. In addition to this, an ideal set of policies for South Africa would need to take into account the particular needs of South African women, as well as acknowledging the restrictions, both material and ideological, that are a part of South African society. These include the fact that there is widespread poverty and inequality, high levels of illiteracy, large numbers of single mothers, large numbers of fathers who are unwilling to play a significant role in the upbringing of their children, a need to access employment opportunities, and a need to drastically improve the quality of care that children receive at present – particularly with the number of children being born affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS. The following section will, through three major policy recommendations attempt to give an idea of what these policies could look like in real terms.

Recommendation 1: Family-friendly Policies in the Workplace

From the above comments it would seem logical that the first priority in terms of formulating appropriate childcare policies, should be to challenge the social norms which dictate that caring and employment are two mutually exclusive activities. This is to challenge the idea that one activity (care) only belongs to the private sphere with no recognition in the public, and one activity (employment) is an entirely public activity

which has little bearing on the private. It is this division between caring and earning, arising as it does from the public/private divide, that has dictated that one cannot be successfully employed whilst a mother. It is therefore this division which has contributed significantly to the economic marginalisation of carers. It is also this division which has largely been responsible for the way in which society has played off the rights of women to economic citizenship, and the rights of their children to receive the best care available. This opposition has traditionally seen both women and children lose out, and it should not be allowed to go unchallenged in a country with as high a number of single mothers as South Africa. How do we go about challenging this norm?

According to Williams (2000), the answer lies in rethinking the ethos of the work environment. This is because, with increasing numbers of women moving into the workforce, the structure of the nuclear family has changed considerably over the last 50 years. Workplaces, however, have not responded to this change (Williams, 2000). Rather, contemporary workplaces continue to assume, in line with the original structure of the nuclear family in relation to waged employment (see Chapter 1), that all employees are supported by a source of relatively permanent and stable family work, and that all 'ideal' employees are therefore able to dedicate all their time and energy to employment activities, unconstrained by care responsibilities (Williams, 2000). The work environment, which has been built on the assumption that the 'ideal' worker has no care responsibilities, has continued to socially ingrain this idea by rewarding those who have had to reject these responsibilities with status and financial success (Williams, 2000). As Williams (2000) has argued, many of the most successful employees are those with wives who have remained home to maintain the household, leaving the working husband with little responsibility for everyday family life. What this does not recognise, of course, is that for many ordinary families, particularly for the women within them, there is no source of full-time, permanent care work anymore, and that many couples now both work full-time, and, as shown in Chapter 2, have to juggle their jobs with family responsibilities.

What clearly needs to happen, then, is that the South African work environment has to begin to adapt to the changing structure of the family (Williams, 2000). It has to recognise that employees today have very different lives from the employees of the original labour markets of industrial capitalism. This is to recognise that employees are very often carers too – that public and private lives are no longer as separate as they once were – and that sidelining people because of their family commitments leads not only to frustration and unhappiness – particularly in the case of single mothers – but also the potential loss of indispensable talent as skilled women in particular, because they are unable to withstand the pressure of both caring and working, move out of the workforce (Hosking, 2006). The ‘ideal worker’, in other words, should no longer be the worker who has to neglect her (or his) family to find economic stability or even success (Williams, 2000). But what can be done to alter the ethos of the workplace and make it more accessible and accepting of those with family responsibilities? According to Williams (2000), one of the most effective ways of breaking down the ideal worker norm, is to institute what have come to be known as ‘family-friendly’ policies.

‘Family-friendly’ policies in the workplace can take a number of different forms, but all of them have a common core. They attempt to accommodate the needs of the working parent, rather than assuming that all employees have someone ‘at home’ to look after their children (Hosking, 2006). They include: flexible working hours, where employees are only required to be physically present at work at certain times of the day depending on the particular requirements of the workplace; as well as job sharing; working from home; working more hours on less days of the week; and bans on meetings scheduled for certain days – such as Friday afternoons (Williams, 2000; Hosking, 2006). Other related policies include providing parents with a certain number of days with which they are able to spend time with ill children, or with children just entering school (Hosking, 2006). As a result, these policies really address the need many women feel to be actively involved in the lives of their children, while still allowing them to continue successfully with their lives in the public sphere. Because of this, these policies can truly be said to attempt to find a middle-ground between the arguments of the equality and difference feminists. Family-friendly policies are not about attempting to re-define the role of women in

society, or breaking down the family, as the equality feminists would have it. Rather, they accept the fact that many women are also primary care-givers. Neither are they about reinforcing the role of women in the private sphere, however. Rather, they are indicative of a more nuanced understanding that the boundaries between the public and the private, while continuing to exist, are becoming more fluid, and that women move in and out of their public and private roles according to their needs.

Of course, the idea of flexi-time, as well as the other policies mentioned above, are not new. Growing numbers of employers in Europe and the USA have begun to institute family-friendly policies on a large scale (Levering, *Financial Times*, 28 April 2005: 6). This has largely been due to the realisation that employers are no longer able to attract the most talented employees with inflexible working hours that effectively deny them a family life (Hosking, 2006). Furthermore, family-friendly policies have been seen as a cost effective means to reduce employee stress, absenteeism, as well as reduce staff turnover rates, which can all cost large companies millions each year (Levering, 2005; Hosking, 2006). South African employers have also begun to tap into this trend with flexi-time policies instituted at top firms such as Ernst & Young and PricewaterhouseCoopers (Vaida, *Sunday Times*, 07 August 2005: 10).

It is not enough to rely on the goodwill of the private sector to institute these policies, however. As the Australian Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews, stated in a 2003 public address, “flexibility at work” is not “simply a work issue.” “With children being critical to Australia’s future,” he stated, “support for families” is also a matter of national importance (cited in Hosking, 2006: 222). The same should be true in South Africa. In order for family friendly policies to become nationally recognised, however, it is necessary to ensure that they are supported by government legislation. This is particularly so if they are to form part of a feminist vision of citizenship, which of itself necessitates some form of state intervention. It is therefore the recommendation of this thesis that family-friendly policies be built into the existing employment legislation which, at present, allows only three days family leave per year outside of the four months of maternity leave, and which makes few other concessions to

work/family tensions (Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1999). As a gender issue, too, family-friendly policies should become a part of the existing employment equity legislation and the equity monitoring structures that are already in place, should be altered to include the monitoring of the implementation of these policies. It is of course recognised that flexi-time is not suited to all workplaces and all forms of employment, but because there is such a wide range of other possible family-friendly policy options, all employers should be compelled, by law, to adopt at least one that is suited to their particular work environment.

There is, however, another compelling reason why family-friendly policies should be given national priority – that is the fact that these policies also tend to allow men greater freedom to fulfil their role as fathers (Williams, 2000; Hosking, 2006). Williams (2000) argues that this is because, in creating a work environment where people are not sidelined for caring, these family-friendly policies have allowed men, whose masculine identity has been inextricably tied up with their role as ‘breadwinners’ and who have therefore often felt tremendous anxiety over their employment status, to feel more secure about actively involving themselves in childcare. This can only be a positive thing in a country like South Africa, where, as was shown in Chapter 2, there are large numbers of absent fathers, or fathers who are unwilling to actively involve themselves in the lives of their families. It is also positive because it is really only when men become involved in care on an equal level with women – and the sexual division of labour is fully broken down – that society will stop marginalizing carers as a whole. If everyone is a carer, then to marginalize carers is to marginalize everyone.

To further encourage this trend then, this thesis further recommends that to the more general family-friendly policies, be added a set of policies that specifically target fathers, and which should also be included in the family-friendly legislation. Hosking (2006) has provided some suggestions. These include support for fathers from top management, where men in the upper echelons of company structures act as role models by actively making use of the family-friendly policies. Hosking (2006) also mentions the provision of paternity leave – something which is conspicuously absent from South African

employment legislation (see Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1999) – and which would do much to bring men closer toward actively embracing fatherhood. In the Scandinavian countries, for example, the uptake of paternity leave by men working in the public sector, is reaching 100 percent (Hosking, 2006).

Of course, even with all of these policies, it is unlikely that South African men will, *en masse*, start assuming their share of the responsibility for childcare. In this case, there is still the need for extra support structures for working mothers (Williams, 2000). This is, possibly, where the argument for socialised care could be made. However, as stated in earlier, socialised care, because it requires both large numbers of skilled workers and expensive material resources, does not take into account the particular restrictions of South African society. In this case, it is perhaps better to make use of the existing support structures – altering them, as best we can, to address some of the criticisms that were laid out in Chapter 2. The following policy recommendation will suggest a care solution which attempts to do this.

Recommendation 2: The Nanny Register

Before this recommendation, however, it is first necessary to briefly review the criticisms that were levelled against the current South African care arrangements in Chapter 2. The first of these was that the personalised nature of the arrangements allows for highly exploitative working conditions for carers – particularly domestic workers. The second was that the standard of care which children receive from these carers – who tend either to be poorly educated, or, particularly in the case of kinship care, are too young or too old to ensure the physical safety of children – is inadequate. In Chapter 3 it was then argued that both of these criticisms could potentially be addressed through the provision of a state-funded, high-quality socialised care network. Later in the chapter, however, it was concluded that, due to a lack of both financial resources and human capital, socialised care in South Africa is unlikely to be, on a widespread level at least, of a high enough standard to really make a difference. What then can be done?

A possible, and perhaps more realistic, solution, might be the provision of a government sponsored 'nanny register' system in every town. This could either form part of the social welfare services, or it could be a municipally run programme. Essentially, the creation of this nanny register would entail the training of a number of 'freelance' domestic workers in at least the basics of ECD education. This could possibly form part of the Expanded Public Works Programme as a skills training component. These domestic workers could then be placed on a database, with a list made available to all households in the area, and could be hired, either on a regular or a temporary basis, by parents who require the services of a nanny. The fees levied for the use of a nanny would be determined according to a sliding scale, depending on the salary levels of parents. This would mean that parents in wealthier areas would pay more, while parents from poorer areas would pay less. This would allow all children, regardless of their parent's financial status, to enjoy the benefits of the system. While this would, in itself, be a major advantage over the present system, there are also a number of other advantages.

The first of these is that the hiring of the nannies could be more effectively monitored by an external agency. The wages, working hours and activities of the nannies could be stipulated in a contract between the controlling agency – either provincial governments or municipalities – and the employer. This would mean that employers would be unable to pay their nannies less than the stipulated minimum wage, and nannies would have greater bargaining power in determining their working hours. This more equitable arrangement would be further supported by the fact that if any breach of contract did still take place, the domestic workers would have an immediately accessible and direct avenue of complaint. The nanny register therefore removes the highly personalised relationship between domestic workers and employers which is often central, as Mills (2002) has argued, to their exploitation.

Secondly it would, to a certain extent at least, address the problem of the low standard of care children received both cognitively and, in many cases, physically. This would not only be because the nannies would be trained in at least the basics of early childhood education – which would allow them to provide at least some of the cognitive stimulation

that child development experts deem so important – but also because it would be easier to monitor the behaviour and actions of the carer. Accompanying the register, for example, could be a widely-accessible comments database linked to each domestic worker. So if a domestic worker had performed unsatisfactorily, had allowed a child to injure itself, or had abused a child in any way, this could be reported to the controlling agency. After an investigation, a comment could be placed on the database which parents would be able to access. In a similar manner, domestic workers who have performed well, or who are particularly good carers could also have the positive comments they receive made public. Furthermore, the agency could itself monitor the performance of the domestic workers with observational visits by inspectors.

Of course, if money is being used to set up the nanny register, it could be argued that this money could also be put to use developing a good socialised care network, which could also provide all of these benefits. The nanny register, however, has two particular advantages over the socialised care argument. Firstly, it is not as expensive. Money would be needed to set up the programme, and it would be needed for training purposes, but, because the care would be carried out in the home, no money would need to be spent on buildings and other physical infrastructure. Furthermore, with time, the programme could become self-financing, particularly if no money has to be spent on expensive building maintenance. Secondly, very young children – whose parents may not feel that they are ready for socialised care – could be accommodated more easily and could continue to be cared for in the home, where they will receive the one-on-one, intensive attention that they generally require. This would also combat the problem of high teacher to child ratios which could possibly dog socialised care centres with few human or financial resources – a scenario that, as has been argued, is very likely to occur in South Africa.

But what about those women who have decided to focus more on care and less on employment? While challenging the division between caring and earning may mean that more women are earner/carers, there will still be many women who will dedicate their lives only to care, or who will, while their children are very young, leave their jobs in

order to provide full-time care. These women, it must be recognised, continue to make a great contribution to society and if we are to value care, they must also be included in any childcare policy decisions. Perhaps even more importantly, however, it is also necessary to recognise that the many unemployed women in South Africa will also be caring for their children, and they, in particular, need more support than most. This is chiefly so with the many women who, due to their own social circumstances, are unable to provide their children with the care that they need. In line with Richter's (2004) argument that children, above all else, need stable and loving relationships with their care-givers in order to flourish – what can be done to help guide and support these women in attempting to give their children the best possible chance in life? The final policy recommendation will focus on policy that helps to value those who, in either a temporary or permanent capacity and either out of choice or because they are unable to find employment, have framed their lives around care-giving.

Recommendation 3: 'Feminizing' Public Space and Mothers' Networks

In the *Second Sex* Simone De Beauvoir (1949: 528) stated that: "What gives mother love its difficulty and its grandeur is the fact that it implies no reciprocity, the mother has not to do with man, a hero, a demigod, but with a small, prattling soul, lost in a fragile and dependent body. The child is in possession of no values, he can bestow none, with him the woman remains alone..." While, as shown in Chapter 3, De Beauvoir was never a fan of motherhood, several authors have also agreed that motherhood in liberal, capitalist society can be an exceptionally lonely and frustrating period in a woman's life (Urwin, 1985; Richardson, 1993; Hays, 1996; Douglas and Michaels, 2004). Richardson (1993), for example, cites a study conducted on working-class, stay-at-home mothers in London, which found that, due to boredom and loneliness, up to one-third of the women interviewed were clinically depressed.

One of the major exacerbating factors behind this loneliness is the physical isolation that is often very much a part of mothering (Hayden, 1980; Markusen, 1980). Childcare – being an activity that is part of the private sphere – is something that is carried out in the

home, which is an entirely isolated entity, due to the capitalist structuring of urban space (Markusen, 1980). As Markusen (1980: 532) argues:

...the 'ideal' single-family, detached, urban or suburban dwelling embraces the contemporary form of household organisation. This form discourages extended family or community sharing of housework, deploys the machinery of housework in individual units, which makes sharing difficult; and replaces collective play space (parks) with individual yards.

Remaining at home to care for a child, then, also means that women are confined to a physical space which effectively cuts them off from more social settings – something which cannot but make motherhood a potentially negative experience for many women (Richardson, 1993). One way in which to make the lives of carers easier, therefore, would be to start challenging the patriarchal, capitalist use of space which has determined that being a mother effectively translates into isolation. What would this mean in real terms?

At the most basic level, it would mean prioritising the creation of parkland and making sure that all parks, old and new, are women and child-friendly. It is recognised, of course, that in a high crime country such as South Africa this is easier said than done. However, high crime rates have not stopped this 'feminisation' of space in places like Hillbrow and Joubert Park in Johannesburg, where community initiatives are attempting to transform empty wasteland into proper, and most importantly, safe, communal areas, equipped with theatre facilities, murals, and play spaces for children (Davie, 2004). These are meant to engender a sense of community and, importantly, to allow women and children to participate in social activities outside of the home – something which is vital if women are to overcome the sense of isolation that motherhood often provokes. If inner-city areas like Hillbrow and Joubert Park can achieve this, it is possible for neighbourhoods in all parts of South Africa to do the same.

Once again, however, it is not enough to rely only on community organisations and the goodwill of civil society. It is government that should be in the driving seat behind such initiatives and here, at least, it cannot complain that there are insufficient funds. In an article entitled 'Manuel battles to spend his billions,' the *Sunday Times* (Richardson and

Boyle, 30 October 2005: 25) reported that finance minister Trevor Manuel has “bundles of cash” waiting for anyone with a “decent” plan for urban and rural physical developments and infrastructure. This thesis argues that a significant percentage of that money should be dedicated to the upgrading and maintenance of good, safe parkland and its attendant community facilities. After all, if investing in parkland means investing in the well-being of mothers and children, then investing in parkland is also about investing in the future of the nation – something which should be a government priority.

Creating communal areas is not enough, however, to help those women who are unable to provide their children with the upbringing they need to be successful in today’s world. To help these women, an idea with much potential would be to create, in each neighbourhood, or municipal subdivision, a state-facilitated network of ‘mothers groups.’ A number of these have flourished in the United States (Rutherford, *TIME* magazine, October 16, 2000). These groups generally offer day time social meetings – which are simultaneously educational – for mothers. They are, therefore, a perfect way in which to challenge, through the education of mothers, the poor care that many children receive in this country. While it is, of course, a more complex task attempting to organise these networks than upgrading parkland, their presence and the potential benefits they could have should be recognised.

Furthermore, in the United States, after the publication of a Carnegie Commission Report which decried the poor care many children were receiving, several states have actively attempted to educate and support mothers with visits from health workers (Collins, *TIME Magazine*, August 25, 1997). In Vermont, for example, the state has initiated a programme called ‘Success by Six’, in which mothers are visited at home within two weeks of the birth in order to both educate women about appropriate childcare practices, as well as to provide a support network for these new mothers. If necessary these visits may continue for up to three years from the birth of a child (Collins, *TIME Magazine*, August 25, 1997). Programmes such as this should become a national priority in South Africa if the government is to take its commitment to the future seriously. If however, they are not entirely feasible in South Africa at present, a possible policy direction might

be to include educational literature or, preferably, seminars on motherhood in a vast array of services and government institutions that women are likely to encounter – ranging from clinics to the skills training programmes that are attached to the *EPWP*.

Conclusion

In Part VI of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates engages with students about the role of women and the family in the model state, and at one point he makes a passing reference to the fact that the rule “ ‘all things in common between friends’ should apply to women and children” (*The Republic*, VI (5): 202). After this brief allusion to the ideal of completely socialised childcare (discussed in Chapter 1), Socrates then attempts to move on with his arguments, but is stopped by Adiemantus, who objects to the fact that Socrates has not gone into enough depth on the matter. Adiemantus argues that Socrates is “being lazy...and trying to avoid dealing with a most important part of the subject” and goes on to say: “We have been waiting for you to give us some idea of how the Guardians are to produce children, and look after them when they are born, and how this whole business of community of wives and children is to work; for it seems to us that this is a matter in which it is vital to society that the right arrangements should be made” (*The Republic*, VI (5): 202). “You were just going on to other forms of constitution before dealing adequately with it,” Adiemantus goes on, “but, as you have heard just now, we decided that we would not let you do so until you had discussed it as fully as everything else” (*The Republic*, VI (5): 202). In response to this, a frustrated Socrates replies: “You don't know what you're doing, holding me up like this,” and then he complains: “It's an enormous subject, and you're starting again from the beginning just as I was congratulating myself on having finished, and was feeling glad that no one had questioned what I had said. You don't know what a hornet's nest you're stirring up by challenging me. I deliberately avoided the subject before, because of all the trouble it would cause” (*The Republic*, VI (5): 202).

Clearly, then, even the great thinker Socrates found the issue of childcare a tricky one to deal with, and it would therefore be unsurprising that recommendations put forward in this thesis – which, unlike Socrates, has not shied away from ‘stirring the hornets nest’ –

barely scratch the surface of what is an “enormous” undertaking. To determine South Africa’s future childcare policies – policies that have a real chance of making an impact on women and children for the better – requires a great deal more research, and discussion, than has been possible in this thesis. What this thesis has hopefully done, however, is to provide the initial impetus that is necessary for the childcare debate to launch itself into the spotlight in South Africa. It is a debate that, while raging in the rest of the world, has failed to make the same impression in South Africa, and it is time for this to change. Childcare policy debates are not only a gender issue, they are also intimately related to the advancement of the nation’s future – its children, and, as a result, it is time they are given the energy and political space they deserve.

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