“It Shouldn’t Have to Be A Trade”: Recognition and Redistribution in Care Work Advocacy

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Care work straddles the divide between activities performed out of love and those performed for pay. The tensions created for workers by this divide raise questions concerning connections between recognition and redistribution. Through an analysis of mobilization among childcare workers, we argue that care workers can address redistribution and recognition simultaneously through vocabularies of both skill and virtue. We conclude with a discussion of strategies to overcome the false dichotomy between recognition and redistribution.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent interview, a childcare organizer summed up the frustration that many caregivers feel in their struggles for both economic reward as workers and social value as carers when she said, “It shouldn’t have to be a trade.” This paper explores how paid care workers, specifically childcare workers, seek legitimacy both as workers and as carers and the strategies they use to resist trading one for the other.1 Because their work so explicitly straddles the competing values of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, care workers serve as a paradigmatic case of the intersection between social recognition and economic redistribution (Fraser 1995, 1998, 2000). In advocating for economic and social justice, care workers must seek fair pay for aspects of their work that are visible, yet devalued, while also seeking recognition for the “invisible” relational components of their labor (Daniels 1987; Macdonald 1998). The nature of care work demands that those who perform it bring a deep aspect of the self to the work in the form of altru-
conducted ten interviews with CCW founders, advocates, local grassroots leaders, and Worthy Wage Network members to explore three sets of questions: In their mobilization efforts, do childcare workers experience tensions between making claims for recognition as altruistic carers and redistribution as skilled workers? How do they overcome the false dichotomy between love and work? In their efforts to value their own work, do they use a vocabulary of love and virtue or one of technical competence and skill?

Recognition and Redistribution

In a series of recent essays, Nancy Fraser has argued that contemporary theories of justice have moved from a vulgar materialism to an equally one-sided emphasis on cultural and identity politics. She argues that the two forms of harm addressed by these theoretical frameworks, although analytically distinct, are deeply intertwined: "Even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms. Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material supports" (1995, 720). This argument suggests that, despite attempts to politically or analytically separate material distribution from cultural/identity recognition, the two combine in such a way as to prevent either from being dominant in the last instance. Though one may be more evident in certain situations, it is important to keep sight of the irreducible connections between recognition and economic justice.

Fraser (1998) argues that recognition and redistribution are particularly inextricable for those groups she defines as "hierarchical"—those that suffer both from social marginalization and from economic deprivation. She uses race and gender as cases in point. Women, for example, suffer maldistribution through wage and occupational discrimination, welfare policies, and divorce laws; at the same time they suffer the effects of misrecognition in demeaning and degrading cultural representations, sexual violence and harassment, and a "pervasive... disparagement of things coded as 'feminine'" (Fraser 1998, 16). Categories such as gender and race, therefore, point to the need to advocate for redistribution and recognition simultaneously.

By reconnecting recognition and redistribution, Fraser echoes G. W. F. Hegel's original formulation of the master-slave dialectic. In the Phenomenology of Spirit (1777) and in its reformulation in the Encyclopedia (1791), self-consciousness and freedom both arise out of a concept of recognition that results from multiple dialectical processes, which are incomplete parts of the same whole by themselves. For example, in the Phenomenology, the master and slave are presented as instances of distorted consciousness and lack of freedom, both of which must be overcome through two processes: the process of self-recognition and a return to an unmediated awareness of the universal essence of freedom.
of subject-subject recognition of the other, and the process of transforming the
world through labor.

The master lacks consciousness, or more specifically, is limited to a parochial
egoism in which he is conscious only of himself and of his desires. Hegel argues
that this narrow state of consciousness can be overcome only through mutual
recognition with an other—with a distinct yet equal consciousness. In the
master-slave dialectic, this overcoming is impossible because the slave exists
for the master as neither distinct nor equal. Only through freeing the slave can
the master achieve full self-consciousness: of the other, of being recognized by
the other, and of the mutuality of their relations. As Robert R. Williams points
out, “Not only must the other be allowed to be, but the other’s free, uncoerced
recognition is crucial to the self” (1997, 57).

An equally crucial moment occurs in the emerging consciousness of the
slave. The slave does not find consciousness through the master’s recognition,
at least not initially. Rather, he finds it through the dialectical process of trans-
forming nature. Rather than experiencing himself as recognized by another,
Hegel points out, “through his labor the slave comes to himself, i.e., becomes
conscious of what he really is... he comes to himself through interaction
with the world, through labor” (1977, 118). The slave’s consciousness emerges
through a moment of subject-object interaction. Thus, two distinct yet partial
processes emerge in the dialectic: the process of subject-subject mutuality and
the process of subject-object transformation of nature; intersubjectivity and
labor. Both moments are present in the creation of human self-consciousness
through recognition. For Hegel, recognition is only fully realized in the unity
of these two moments and in the entire dialectical movement through various
partial and failed attempts.

Philosophers and political theorists who draw on Hegel have emphasized
only one aspect of this dialectic instead of drawing on its totality. In his earlier
writings, Karl Marx underscored the subject-object moment, the labor-centered
aspect of Hegel’s struggle for recognition. We are alienated from our fellows
because we relate to them as means or as objects; we are alienated from ourselves
because we cannot recognize ourselves, or our own creative energies, in our
own processes of production (1844, 120–26). Of course in Marx’s later writings,
and in vulgar interpretations of Marx, questions of control and ownership of
capital and distribution eclipse questions of recognition and the importance
of creativity in human self-realization. Recognition and creativity fall away in
the face of claims for distributive justice.

In more recent theorizing, however, this emphasis on the material dimen-
sions of justice claims has given way to attention to identity-based struggles for
intersubjective recognition. Contemporary recognition theorists such as Axel
Honneth and Charles Taylor focus on the identity-forming and psychological

Honneth, for example, argues that social life is made possible through inter-
subjective recognition and that humans develop as individuals, collectivities,
and moral actors through a dialogic process of three forms of recognition:
love, rights, and solidarity. His third concept is most useful in this immedi-
ate context. Honneth defines solidarity as “that form of recognition through
which the value of individual capabilities are strengthened...here one may
think of that kind of special consideration we owe to each other insofar as we
participate jointly in the realization of a project” (1997, 32). Solidarity gives
rise to self-esteem, according to Honneth, and withholding solidarity results in
“denigration and insult.”

Honneth argues that the harms created through misrecognition are pri-
marily psychological and intersubjective—wounds to the subjectivity of the
misrecognized. They include cultural domination, invisibility, and disrespect,
and are understood to be inflicted on individuals as members of subordinated
groups: individuals suffer misrecognition because of gender, race, sexuality,
religion, and other culturally relevant markers. Since mutual recognition is
a prerequisite for fully realized subjectivity, and this is, in turn, a prerequisite
for the capacity to be a moral actor within society, the effects of these wounds
move out from the individual to the larger social system (Honneth 1995, 1996,
1997). However, the primary harm of misrecognition according to theorists
like Honneth and Taylor is the harm to the subject: misrecognition precludes
subjectivity and makes subjects into objects.

Fraser eschews this psychological emphasis, arguing that it tends both to
displace redistribution and to reify identity. Consequently, Fraser moves to
reconnect labor and redistribution with recognition by defining misrecog-
nition as “status injury” rather than as wounded identity: “From this perspective,
misrecognition is neither a psychic deformation nor a freestanding cultural
harm but an institutional relation of social subordination” (Fraser 2000, 113).
Accordingly, the harm inflicted on those deprived equal status, what we will
call the withholding of institutional recognition, is not harm to the psyche or
group identity, but harm that prevents group members from participating fully
as partners in society. The justice claim implicit in this concept of recognition
is not that everyone has a right to self-realization or “undistorted identity-for-

mation,” but that everyone has “an equal right to pursue social esteem under
fair conditions of equal opportunity” (Fraser 1998, 27). Fraser furthers the
connection between recognition and redistribution by locating both forms of
justice and injustice in social institutions, be they governmental, economic,
familial, or cultural. By asserting that this kind of institutional recognition
and economic redistribution are both coequal and intertwined, Fraser recaptures
some of Hegel’s robust formulation of recognition.

We agree with Fraser’s reassessment of the importance of redistribution to
discourses on recognition and to justice claims. However, Fraser’s concept of
institutional recognition too easily dismisses what we will call intersubjective recognition. Institutional recognition emphasizes the patterned ways that recognition occurs, or fails to occur, through organizations, cultural norms, and other structures of social interaction. Intersubjective recognition emphasizes the subject-subject forms of mutuality that contribute to self-esteem and identity. We argue that neither aspect is reducible to the other and that they are interconnected in important ways. Based on our analysis of care work we find that both modes of recognition are necessary for participatory parity and for redistributive justice. Thus, recapturing the importance of the subjective dimension of recognition requires teasing out the fine distinctions between institutional and intersubjective recognition as they are made manifest in human interaction.

**Institutional Recognition in Care Work**

The salience of institutional misrecognition is demonstrated, for example, in studies of the gendered nature of occupational categories. Joan Acker's analysis of comparable worth policies is a case in point. She finds that efforts to evaluate jobs and to set corresponding pay scales are fundamentally gendered efforts. She argues that jobs are evaluated based on gendered images that support male dominance: "The invisibility to the men [on the team of evaluators] of many aspects of women's jobs came in heated exchanges over Human Relations skills in the course of lengthy discussions of higher-level office jobs..." To the men, the women were only arguing that secretaries or administrative assistants had to be nice and polite for longer periods of time than the bridge worker, not that there was anything qualitatively different about the work" (Acker 1989, 223). Acker is careful to point out that even in efforts to reevaluate jobs for comparable worth purposes, disagreements about the skills, knowledge, and value of different jobs arise, in part, from a gendered lens that points much of the work that women conventionally do as unskilled, "natural," and/or easy. Acker demonstrates how the invisible components of women's work are not taken into consideration and therefore do not increase their pay, while the devalued aspects of women's work are taken into consideration and lower their pay.

Similarly, we can see how institutional misrecognition affects the compensation of childcare workers. Childcare workers are poorly paid not only because 97 percent of them are women nor only because 11 percent are women of color, but also because they are childcare workers (U. S. Census Bureau 1999, 426). They are poorly paid because they perform care work. Paula England and Nancy Folbre (1999) document numerous studies that find that, controlling for other occupational and demographic characteristics, including gender, both men and women earn less when they are in caring occupations. In fact, as Julie Nelson (1999) points out, some economists argue that paying care workers well would taint the occupation by attracting workers who are not motivated solely by the intrinsic rewards of caregiving. Caregivers' experiences of being socially devalued stem not only from their gender, race, or class, but from what England and Folbre call the "care penalty" they incur because of the work they do. Their contributions to the greater good are demeaned and misrecognized because their work is defined as unskilled, as work that could (and perhaps should) be limited to the private sphere, and because it is customarily performed by members of marginalized groups.

Institutional misrecognition thus plays a critical role in the unequal pay and disrespect accorded low-status jobs, and the low status that the occupants of these jobs experience. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn argues, "To the extent that caring is devalued, invisible, underpaid, and penalized, it is relegated to those who lack economic, political, and social power and status. And to the extent that those who engage in caring are drawn disproportionately from among disadvantaged groups (women, people of color, and immigrants), their activity—that of caring—is further degraded" (2000, 84). This "nasty circle" contributes to the overall devaluation of caregiving as a practice and of care receiving as a human need. Any attempt to revalue care work must involve not only appeals to redistributive justice, but also to overcoming institutional misrecognition.

**Intersubjective Recognition in Care Work**

To fully understand the intersection of redistribution and recognition, however, we must also view the workplace as a site of identity formation and of self-expression. Intersubjective recognition, as it pertains to identity-formation and self-definition, is crucial in struggles for institutional recognition and for redistribution. This means taking seriously the concept of misrecognition as injury to the self. Care workers' organizing efforts indicate not only the continuing salience of struggles for economic redistribution and institutional recognition, but also the equally critical importance of intersubjective recognition within pay equity movements. Care workers bring a deep investment of the self to their work. As others have argued (Himmelweit 1999; Nelson 1996; Macdonald 1996 and 1998; Stone 2000b; Tuominen 2000), the invisible, emotional components of care work are some of the primary activities of caring labor. This emotional and psychological investment places heavy demands on care workers, but is also fundamental to their identities as care workers. Yet it is also frequently devalued, as we find in our interviews of childcare workers, advocates, and grassroots leaders. Childcare workers continually mourn the personal disrespect they experience in relation to their work: "just took care of kids." As one family daycare provider noted, "Those are the words you hear. That's one of those 'respect' words." Another remarked, "You go to a party and say, 'I work in childcare,' and people go get the chips. Or they say, 'You're kind of smart to be doing [that].'''
Those aspects of their work that childcare workers most value, attachments to children in their care, are also demeaned or ignored. Parents, for example, may need to diminish the significance of a child’s attachment to a caregiver because they feel threatened, or because they simply do not consider that this person might be significant in their child’s life. A family daycare provider remarked, “What happens is that people feel that most relationships are negated. In family childcare I often feel like parents negate the relationships among children... they justify taking the kid out of your program without really thinking what does this mean to the caregiver and this child and to their relationship with the other kids.” Similarly, caregivers often feel that their care itself is demeaned because it is the kind of work that “anyone could do”: it is viewed as work that comes naturally to women or to subordinate people who are innately nurturing, a quality that justifies their subordination. One could argue that Fraser’s framework of institutional misrecognition can account for many of the injuries described above. However, it cannot account for how misrecognized parties internalize harm, or for how injuries to the self can prevent individuals and groups from acting in their own best interests.

Care workers themselves often believe that love and work are mutually exclusive. For example, Marcy Whitebook, cofounder of the Center for the Childcare Workforce (CCW), points out that early advocates for higher wages for childcare workers needed to appeal to the workers that low wages were driving turnover, and that turnover was affecting the quality of childcare before childcare workers themselves would “get on board” to advocate for better pay. Even after the initial childcare staffing study (Whitebook, Hayes, and Phillips 1990) documented the connection between the abysmal average levels of compensation for childcare workers and high rates of caregiver turnover, she notes, “the field itself was not ready to say ‘we deserve better’,” until high turnover was connected with poor quality of care. Whitebook notes, “People who take care of kids put the kids’ needs over their own. What we’ve tried to do is to say they are one and the same: that basically if you don’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of the kids. Either you won’t stay or you’ll be so burnt out that you won’t be there for the kids. Or you won’t invest in training and education.” Organisers found that the majority of childcare workers were willing to mobilize as workers only if they could advocate in the name of the children in their care and preserve their sense of being good carers in the process.

Intersubjective misrecognition may keep members of marginalized groups from considering the pursuit of social parity. This is not merely an instance of false consciousness or of internalized oppression. Intersubjective misrecognition is often the negation of a set of values the subject may deeply hold and that constitute critical aspects of the subject’s identity. Misrecognized subjects find themselves devalued in what they do, who they are, and in the values they most cherish. For childcare workers, seeking recognition as altruistic carers and as valued contributors to the social good, therefore, becomes a necessary step toward advocating for equal status as workers. Thus, intersubjective recognition becomes a necessary precursor to rights claims.

In the case of care workers, both forms of misrecognition can contribute not only to a lack of self-esteem, but also to poor quality care. For example, Robin West argues that the “virtue” demonstrated by caregivers, primarily women, “comes with a high psychic price as well as the self-evidently high economic price, and that is the damage done to the woman’s own sense of personal integrity, and even sense of selfhood” (1997, 82). Beyond this, however, to adequately perform their jobs, caregivers must be intersubjectively attuned to the needs of others. The very definition of care assumes this kind of attunement, yet care relations inevitably become distorted when caregivers are not full subjects (Benjamin 1988; Meehan 1995). Depleted care workers, deprived not only of fair pay but of equal voice and of mutual relations of recognition with employers and others, cannot possibly meet the needs of care recipients, much less advocate for themselves.

Care workers who believe that their self-worth stems from their ability to place the needs of care recipients above their own are therefore barred from “full partnership” by two kinds of misrecognition: institutional misrecognition that defines care work as nonwork, as unskilled work, or female workers as nonworkers; as well as intersubjective misrecognition that bars them from equal access to social esteem by the accumulated psychic harms inflicted on them in interactions with others. Here we would argue that neither intersubjective nor institutional recognition is the more critical of the two forms: they are not entirely separable, nor can one be reduced to the other. Instead we would argue that these two forms of social justice are deeply intertwined and must be simultaneously, if separately, addressed in order for marginalized groups to mobilize effectively. Therefore, we do not argue for separate concepts of recognition, but for a more robust and inclusive definition of recognition that addresses both intersubjective and institutional dimensions.

Mobilizing in Two Languages

Childcare workers struggle to be taken seriously as skilled workers and to assert their right to be recognized as altruistic carers. For most care workers, intersubjective recognition means being acknowledged for the value of loving attachments between care providers and care recipients, the idiosyncratic nature of these attachments, and the caregiver’s worth as a nurturing individual. Institutional recognition means making the invisible work of care visible, and deconstructing the gendered paradigm that codes childcare work as feminine, and therefore “natural.” Redistribution in this context means simultaneously acknowledging that caregiving work is skilled labor and worthy of fair pay. However, the percep-
tion of jobs as skilled and worthy of higher pay is generally based on objectifiable skills and technical knowledge. Care workers struggling to seek acknowledgment and legitimacy for their work therefore must contend with the bifurcated definition of care and work: making claims both in the vocabulary of skill and in the vocabulary of virtue.

Claims for recognition made solely in the vocabulary of skill often net gains for workers in terms of pay and benefits, as well as in increased occupational prestige. However, this strategy tends to further devalue and sometimes negate the emotional and relational components of care work because the discourse of skill requires accepting dominant definitions of "skilled work." For example, some nursing organizations have argued for higher pay based on their ability to perform complex medical tasks, as opposed to claiming that the emotional labor they perform is skilled. This, in turn, results in labor-market segmentation, in which the "unskilled" work of emotional and physical care is delegated to low-status, low-paid workers (Glazer 1991; Sacks 1991). This strategy can also result in the complete erasure of interactive and emotion work from the job description, which means that workers do not receive institutional recognition for these activities since they are not part of the objective criteria for performance. Instead, they must squeeze in these activities between legitimate tasks, which results in a de facto work speed-up (Diamond 1992). Workers whose jobs have been revalued using the language of skill often find that their care work is so standardised and routinised that it lacks the spontaneity, creativity, and autonomy that can make caring for others intrinsically satisfying.

On the other hand, care workers who define themselves using a vocabulary of virtue may choose to place the needs of care recipients before their own needs as evidence of their status as good caregivers. Deborah Stone, for example, points out that visiting nurses frequently "check on" patients on their days off (1999). These caregivers take pride in their work and in the generosity they view as an essential component of that work and of their identities as caring individuals. Stone notes that, "Caregiving bureaucracies are betting that the caregivers will dip into the well of their own humanity to offset the budget constraints and the stifling rulebooks" (Stone 1999, 66).

Vocabularies of virtue defend the value of invisible care work and can result in high levels of satisfaction for workers in terms of their personal connections and their sense of making a contribution, often at the expense of fair wages. A childcare worker uses the vocabulary of virtue to explain her choice to stay in a less than satisfactory position when she could have sought better pay elsewhere: "[The money] wasn't it, though. I mean, I could have gone elsewhere and gotten that amount of money—I think it was more that they gave me what I wanted emotionally. Like, they praised me—constantly and they were amazed at all the things I could do, like getting the kids to do stuff they didn't want to do and—well, I was very attached to the kids." She chose to accept recognition of the importance of her connection with the children in her care, of her worth as a carer, over the promise of better pay. Workers who frame their employment identities solely in the vocabulary of virtue frequently "break their own contracts" when personal concern for a child's well-being overrides their own economic self-interest (Tuominen 2000), and thus often pay a higher care penalty.

How can workers seek recognition and compensation for their work without falling into this dichotomous definition? How can they make visible and affirm the elements of care, such as love and nurturing, that go beyond credentialing and task-based criteria without falling into the trap of essentializing those elements as innate? How can care workers affirm those aspects of their work that require training and standardization while maintaining their rights to autonomy and creativity, and simultaneously asserting the value of invisible relational work? From our research on CCW's mobilizing strategies, we have found that a strategy that seeks justice in both normative realms of recognition and redistribution must do three things: it must create a language that articulates the value of the nonquantifiable relational skills of care work; it must firmly link the needs and rights of care workers to the needs and rights of care recipients; and it must advocate for care as a public good and public subsidy for fair wages. It must, therefore, attend to the logic of both institutional and intersubjective recognition.

CCW accomplishes this by specifically articulating the relational aspects of its work in Model Work Standards for both center-based and family daycare providers: for example, the preamble to the Model Work Standards (1998, 1999) statement from CCW states that the standards aim to "acknowledge the complexity of childcare jobs which demand education and training, physical and emotional strength, constant vigilance, creativity, intense human interaction every day all day long, a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence in order to instil the same in children, and a commitment to fostering human development in children and the many adults involved in childcare" (1998 and 1999, 4). This statement presents a balanced articulation of work that has been conventionally defined as skilled and qualities that have been conventionally defined as innate, and presents them as equally crucial.

In this vein, Worthy Wage initiatives such as the proposed FOCUS act (Focus on Committed and Underpaid Staff for Children's Sake) would provide $5 billion over five years to states for funding retention of qualified caregivers and scholarships for improved training. Existing programs like CARES in California, Provider Merit Pay in Montana, the WAGES project in North Carolina, and Wisconsin Quality Improvement Grants have allotted wage increases for experienced and well-trained caregivers who stay in the same workplace and remain connected to the same children, thus valuing experiential knowledge and relational continuity. Similarly, programs in California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota offer stipends to experienced and accredited childcare workers who
take on apprentices through community-college based mentoring programs (Bellm, Burton, Shaulka, and Whitebrook 1997). All of these efforts link higher compensation to improved education, training, and skill, while also emphasizing the relational and experiential components of caring as worthy of fair compensation. Many Worthy Wage Network members also advocate for strategies to credential experiential learning, so childcare workers can be recognized for the caring abilities and skills they already possess.

One CCW advocate states that this balance between seeking recognition as carers and fair pay as workers is of critical concern to the Worthy Wage Network. She notes that CCW organizers are mindful of the dangers inherent in advocating only in a vocabulary of skill. Like others in the campaign, she is wary of the lure of framing claims for legitimacy using the educational system as a model, even though they believe in encouraging and enabling childcare workers to seek more training. Although they are aware that in the status hierarchy of early childcare, preschool teachers are “in a higher category of esteem” than daycare providers, CCW has purposely avoided the trend toward using the term “early childhood education” instead of “childcare.” “The Center for the Childcare Workforce intentionally keeps the words child care in our name because . . . we’re trying to re-claim the word ‘care’ and to proclaim its value for what it is . . . When we start dropping off the word ‘care,’ we’re just saying that’s a whole part of it that isn’t really valuable. And that that’s not part of the paycheck; it isn’t about the caring part. The paycheck is about the educating part.” Although it might be more expedient to seek legitimacy by redefining themselves as early childhood educators, thus embracing only the vocabulary of skill, these childcare organizers are committed to defending both the economic and the intrinsic values of caregiving.

A second way that care workers can achieve recognition for the value of their work is through alliances with care recipients and their families, either as advocates for those who cannot advocate for themselves, or as allies sharing similar concerns. Educating consumers helps care workers. They receive appreciation and recognition for the care and nurturing from those who benefit most directly from it. The coordinator of the Model Work Standards survey noted that “respect from parents” was second only to increased wages in responses from childcare providers. She noted that providers wrote, “I want to be involved in decisions; I want more respect on my job; I want parents to understand the work I do.” Consequently, the Worthy Wage Campaign has instituted programs such as “job shadowing,” in which parents are invited into the care environment to assist the caregiver for a day and gain an understanding of her work.

These practices benefit care workers in another way: the more consumers understand the complexity and intense demands of the work, the more likely they are to value their caregiver and be willing to pay higher fees or, more importantly, to align with caregivers on political campaigns for public fund-

ing. The Worthy Wage Network has successfully rallied support from parents in the fight for better working conditions by disseminating information on the effects of poor pay on caregiver turnover and its subsequent effects on child development and well-being. As the Worthy Wage jingle succinctly puts it: “Parents can't afford to pay; Teachers and Providers can’t afford to stay; help us find another way!” Other care workers, such as the California Nurses Association, have followed a similar strategy of demanding better working conditions by educating the public about the connections between staffing ratios and the quality of care.

Intersubjective recognition from consumers is a critical aspect of caregivers’ struggle for redistribution. In order to achieve higher wages, care workers must challenge the conventional notions that care is unskilled, natural, and performed exclusively for altruistic reasons. However, the struggle for higher wages can also pit childcare workers against care recipients since higher wages often translate into additional costs to families. As CCW cofounder Marcy Whitebook points out,

> Basically childcare is a service that needs to be like public education, and in the absence of a third-party payer, and in the presence of a lot of for-profit groups, you're going to short-change the workers or you're going to short-change the parents.

Consequently, a third, and most crucial, part of their strategy is to unite with care recipients in an effort to achieve public funding for childcare. Although CCW organizers may not want childcare to function like public education, they do want it to be funded like public education.

Worthy Wage advocates have therefore advocated for public provision to increase the quality of childcare by creating publicly funded salary supplements for caregivers who stay in their jobs a year or longer, or who receive additional training, have bilingual skills, or who act as mentors to other childcare workers. For example, in September, California's Governor Davis signed into law a bill that provided $15 million in retention incentives for childcare workers, a fund that was augmented by $40 million in state and local tobacco tax dollars through the passage of Proposition 10. Similarly, the TEACH program now provides publicly financed health insurance to daycare workers and family childcare center owners in eight states (Center for the Childcare Workforce, 2000). All of these initiatives not only increase public funding for childcare, but also further the recognition of childcare as a public good.

Connecting redistribution and recognition necessarily entails the above three strategies. In order for childcare workers to achieve recognition and redistribution, they must appeal to the multiple constituencies within which their work is situated. Care workers must be able to esteem the intersubjective and monetary value of their contributions to the greater good, and to connect
being well paid with being able to provide high-quality care. Through intersubjective recognition from care recipients and their families, care workers are able to esteem their work and to mobilize around issues of the right to give and to receive good care.

Conclusion

Numerous scholars (Tronto 1993; Glenn 2000; Stone 2000a) have argued that revaluing care work is an integral component of any strategy to create a just society. Care workers may seek to revalue their work in one of three ways. First, caregivers may seek to revalue their work in the vocabulary of skill. They redefine their needs for recognition, sacrificing those aspects of their work that require emotional engagement in favor of defining the work in line with already legitimized skill sets in terms of redistribution. In these cases, workers redefine their understanding of what is valuable about their work in exchange for higher wages. Second, they may articulate their position in the vocabulary of virtue. Recognition is frequently offered in lieu of fair pay, and care workers pride themselves on the fact that they put the needs of care recipients ahead of their own economic interests.

Finally, however, recognition can be used as a means to empower workers, to enable them to advocate for themselves and on behalf of care recipients, and as a basis for redistributive claims. As one organizer notes, her approach to organizing with parents aims at “building a mutual empathy for each other’s work,” thus building a bridge between provider and consumer, and between paid and unpaid caregivers. Not only does recognition generate benefits for care workers in terms of empathy and respect, but also it can lead to economic redistribution through the combined efforts of care consumers and care providers. Once joined, these groups are in a better position to mobilize effectively for the public provision of care, which will create higher wages without laying the burden of redistribution on care recipients. In this latter case, intersubjective recognition, institutional recognition, and redistribution are not mutually exclusive, but are mutually enhancing.

Notes

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1. We focus on childcare workers for the sake of brevity, but it is important to note that the same issues are currently being faced in similar ways by nursing unions and organizations mobilizing home health care workers and nursing home workers.

2. This article is part of a larger project that includes a comparative analysis of childcare organizing with nursing unions. Thus it draws on data from research on the strategies of both the CCW and the California Nurses Association. We chose these two groups as case studies because they have had economic and political successes while maintaining a balance between articulating the need for redistribution and recognition. For the sake of brevity, this article focuses on childcare workers (see Macdonald 2000).

3. Dorothy Smith (1987) also accounts for material and cultural intersections in her discussion of distorted gender relations. The “standpoint of women” is crucial to understanding larger social relations, not only because women are devalued, but also because they do the reproductive labor that makes the public sphere possible. Their standpoint, therefore, resembles that of Hegel’s slave, because it accounts for consciousness through subordination and consciousness through life-sustaining labor.

4. In keeping with Hegel’s language, we use the masculine pronoun in our discussion of the dialectic.

5. This process does not occur in the formulation in the Phenomenology, in which the master and slave are locked in a distorted relationship, but comes to fruition in Hegel’s later works, in which the slave is freed.

6. It is not our aim to enter into debates concerning the internal consistency of Hegel’s earlier and later formulations or to draw on one as definitive. For considerations of this issue see, for example, Williams 1997 and Habermas 1973.

7. Interestingly, although the concept of solidarity as described by Axel Honneth (1995, 1996, 1997) would seem to apply to recognition for one’s contribution to the larger social good, including one’s work, he does not include occupational groups in his analysis.

8. For an insightful discussion of the workplace as a locus of identity formation see Schulz 2000.

9. See also Phillips, Howe, and Whitebook 1991 for similar findings.

References


