

Gendered Racial Formations and the  
Controlling Images of Early Childhood Educators

by

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## ABSTRACT

While much research exists examining the feminization of the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE), little has been done to examine the ways in which race and gender interact in the experiences of early childhood educators. Using gendered racial formation theory (Omi & Winant, 1994) this paper examines how cultural representations are employed by the field of ECE to produce ideal early childhood educators along both racial and gendered lines. Ultimately, this paper argues that in order for labor equality to be reached in the field there must be a reexamination of the social organization of care (Glenn, 2000).

*Keywords:* race, gender, early childhood education

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## Prologue

When you first walk into *Hope in Poverty*<sup>1</sup> there is a massive wall hanging of a hand-quilted Black child. She has a wide eyed smile, beautifully crafted dimples, and is holding a daisy. A few months into my work there I learned that the previous director of the center is now a quilter and continues to donate quilts to the children there. As you continue through the hallway you can peer into the older preschool room to see their artwork hanging on the wall, paint drips on the floor. Next you enter the lobby to see a fish tank, donated and maintained by a local pet store. There are a couple of couches that I suspect were brought from someone's living room. The lobby peers into the kitchen and the smell of over-cooked chicken nuggets and wilted broccoli is perpetually wafting through the entire center.

For many who have worked in non-profits relating to poverty and children this is likely a very familiar description. There was nothing extraordinary about this non-profit and as I suspect my thesis will conclude that the organization, and others like it, was both productive and repressive. Reflecting on my time there I saw families for whom our support was critical, for others I saw us as replicating oppressive systems that demand assimilation and box mothers into particular parenting practices. While I grappled with the morality of working there, my coworkers were dealing with problems that would soon consume my thoughts.

I got hired at \$35k a year, a relatively good starting salary for ECE and for someone my age. I was a young and naïve teacher. In fact, when I was first hired I was not fully certified and therefore needed constant supervision by a more trained teacher. This additional work for my coworkers meant that I did not immediately receive a warm welcome. Furthermore, I was one of only a few White

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms were used for the organization and all the women described.

teachers and was heavily reliant upon my Latina coworkers for help with translating to and from Spanish.

I was so impressed with the grace and skill with which these women took on their jobs, my jaw nearly dropped when I found out that the lead teacher in my room only made a little more than me. Samantha, a coworker of mine who will be further introduced throughout the paper, was making the same amount as me, a recent graduate with no dependents and a lot of school debt. She and many of my coworkers had incredible skill built from years and years of experience, sometimes generationally passed down. I watched Samantha calm down a screaming mother, I watched her apply ice packs to an infant with a spiking fever, and I watched as she crafted an afternoon activity that occupied every child's attention. Samantha is brilliant, as is Idania, an older Honduran woman who was caught in a bind with our organization. Prior to me getting hired, *Hope in Poverty* was undergoing a rebranding of sorts. As part of their strive towards excellence they were now requiring all their teachers to have at least an Associate's degree and those without a Bachelor's would be demoted. For Idania this meant that her twenty plus years in the field were not as important in the eyes of her employer as a diploma. The irony in all this was that I, a highly educated woman who majored in Child Development at an elite liberal arts school, was constantly turning to Idania for training, help, and advice. When I began I didn't know how to change a diaper, let alone critically think about disciplinary measures. Despite this uncomfortable aspect of our relationship and our significant, age, class, race, immigration, and language differences, Idania and I became close friends. She still calls me to help her with her homework as she is now working fulltime and spending her own money to take classes in order to keep her job at the age of 64.

These relationships set the stage for a mapping of the shifting and evolving power dynamics in ECE and specifically at *Hope in Poverty*. Much like my

first day on the job, I am entering this study with my eyes wide open and little previous experience or knowledge. Prior to the start of the paper I'd like to spend some time addressing my methodological quandaries surrounding this research. I had lofty goals of developing a robust auto-ethnographic project that centered more fully and explicitly the words of the women I worked with. However, due to time constraints I have restricted this paper to an examination of the theoretical side of these questions. I hope to one day apply these theoretical frameworks to a dissertation that allows more time and space to the women who deserve it. In the meantime, below are my thoughts on my positionality in this research.

### **Methodology**

This project privileges the voices of feminists of Color for two reasons. As many of these scholars point out, the feminist movement and feminist studies have historically either ignored the material realities of women of Color (Crenshaw, 1994) or have colonized their struggle making it their own (Mohanty, 1984). Considering my own positionality as a White woman engaging in questions of gender and race, I find it necessary to rely on women of Color writing, in order to more fully understand the role, I play as a researcher both historically and contemporarily.

The second reason I engage feminist of Color theorizing is because many of my (informal) participants are immigrant women of Color. In studying institutionally, the roles of race and gender in ECE, my participants will range from within all strata of the institution, they will vary in racial and class locations. As Patricia Hill-Collins suggests, as outsiders-within, women of Color, especially within fields of care, hold specific knowledge of the workings of power (1996). Therefore, I have taken up a methodological praxis that interrogates my relationship to these women in our specific colonial context.

Prior to beginning this project I developed five feminist principles in research in the course *Justice Research Methods*. I returned to them throughout my

writing to help ground myself in my purpose and to continue to make them relevant to my research. Each principle is highlighted below, along with explanations of how I came to them.

- I will take up institutional research that examines the power in Early Childhood Education as a gendered racialized project of the State. As such I will be “studying up”, centering the voices of women of Color, in order, to engage the workings of Whiteness.

The importance of institutional research was initially brought to light by Black lesbian feminists through a Boston led organization, The Combahee River Collective (May, 2015). These women emphasized the importance of examining how Black women are particularly vulnerable to State and societal violence. This call to action was taken up by Crenshaw (1994) in her canonical piece “Mapping the Margins.” Here Crenshaw shows how feminism and anti-racism have systematically ignored the needs of women of Color. These writers thus analyze sexism and racism at a systemic level through what Crenshaw coins, intersectionality.

Using intersectionality Alexander (2005) writes of the need for scholarship that maps the State. As Alexander says, “state practices must figure far more prominently in our analyses and political organizing than they have historically” (p. 114). In relation to my own research Bloch (1991) is important to understanding the history of early childhood education as a site of feminization and State influence. She argues that as a way of resisting feminization in the field and gaining credibility, early childhood researchers clung to hard sciences and psychology for truth making and knowledge production. This reinforced an already developing child centered discourse, which placed any societal failures within the individual. For example, poverty became the fault of individuals in our democratic society, thus, poor children are understood as having something inherently wrong with them. Bloch

argues that by centering the individual, early childhood education has become a site for State invasion. While her analysis mostly focuses on the impact this has on children and families receiving care, I see many opportunities for analysis among caregivers. In opposition to the historical use of science to defend the system of early childhood education, I am interested in looking at the racialized feminization of the field for the workers themselves. Instead of placing fault within individuals I am looking institutionally.

- I will be diligent in thinking about how power shifts and realigns in varying contexts. Specifically, as I engage in an institutional context with varying participant positionalities I will consider how I relate to participants across time and space. I will engage the gradations of endogeny, thinking of myself as both relating and being distanced from participants in different ways.

As seen through out my time as a former employee of this organization and in the writings of many of the authors I read, the insider/outsider dynamic requires interrogation. I was most drawn to Nelson's (1996) phrase, "gradations of endogeny." By this she means that scholars must consider the social, political, and historical context of their relationships with participants. Taking up Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, Nelson displays how assuming sameness across one axis of identity, ignores the gradated way in which we all relate and are distanced from one another. As Nelson suggests, my relationship with my participants is not as static as colonial legacy would have me think. Nelson and Narayan open up a space for a broader complication of research, who can do it and how. While I originally felt a great distance from my fellow co-workers on the basis of language, culture, race, and immigration status. I also found great commonalities with them as a queer "Othered" woman.

However, I must be critical of how I relate to my informants. For example, I feel particularly close to them on the basis that we are all women. Rather than using this to express sameness, my research will be enriched



with a thorough interrogation of how that sameness exists but is limited in specific ways. The gradations of endogeny are helpful for breaking down an intersectional analysis of relationships.

The following excerpt outlines a moment in the field that perfectly exemplifies the gradations of endogeny. This White young coworker of mine spent significant time oscillating between comfort and discomfort with me.

In constructing this same-ness she glossed over significant differences between us, thus failing to consider the gradations of endogeny. For example, she ignored my queerness, instead favoring to bond over Whiteness. This came up specifically when we were discussing a frustrating situation with a coworker. He is a Latino gay man and worked in my classroom. He often left the domestic work to the women in the room, so that I and another woman had to do most of the cleaning. When I expressed frustration over this she retorted, that he was only hired because he is gay and Latino. In this capacity, she ignored my own gayness and fell back on our Whiteness. In addition, she assumed that with my Whiteness would come a willingness to engage in racist conversation (Field note, October 13, 2015).

In my research it will be important for me to go through the specificities of my varying relationships, not relying on a one dimensional analysis of power. In many ways I felt closer to the women who at face value would seem farthest from me. The gradations of endogeny account for these complications in institutional thinking.

- I will be conscious of how my previous employment in the field and my relationships with my participants will impact my perception of how power operates and the impact this research will have on their continued work in the field.

This principle draws directly from Narayan's (1993) coining of the phrase, "enactment of hybridity." According to her this is "writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life" (p. 672). This form of self-reflexivity complicates the dominant belief that researchers can somehow remove themselves from *real life* experiences. She says, "Whether we are disempowered or empowered by prevailing power relations, we must all take responsibility for

how our personal locations feed not just into our field work interactions but also our scholarly texts” (p. 681). By enacting hybridity I can better understand the real human impact I can have on my participants and the impact they can have upon me. As I outline in many of my annotated bibliographies, I had complex relationships with my participants prior to even considering this project. Engaging both gradations of endogeny and an enactment of hybridity presents a challenge to understand myself in a new role as researcher. While I was different for my racial and class location previously, I will now be different for my identities and as a researcher. This new label brings with it even more power. This is very real when considering the intense friendships and tangles in the institution.

- I will be critical of how I interpret the words of my participants and ascribe value to their work and lives.

As Wolf (1996) makes clear, power does not cease to exist after field work is completed, in fact, it can be amplified during the interpretative, writing, and publicizing processes. I have committed myself to a project that institutionally examines how women of Color are disadvantaged in the field of early childhood education. While I am studying up, using the words of women of Color to inform how Whiteness operates across power, I need to be careful to not relegate these participants to an analysis of purely oppression.

Mohanty also writes against the defining of Third World women “prior to their entry into social relations.” I need to be critical of the trap of defining Third World women only in relation to their oppression, as powerless.

The methodology described above does not comprehensively address the ongoing and complex power dynamics at play in this research, however, it does directly align me with feminist and critical race research praxis. The paper below is written with these principles close at heart.

## Controlling Images of Early Childhood Educators

My supervisor, Samantha, and I were scraping crayon off of children's tables. She is an immigrant from the Dominican Republic and was eight months pregnant at the time. She had been working for this non-profit which provided child care services for homeless families for nearly fifteen years. We were notified earlier in the day that we would have to work on a federal holiday and were using this moment of quiet in the classroom to talk with one another about it. She said to me, "They say they care about families, but what about our families? What about my babies?"

Samantha is the provider for her four-person, soon to be five-person, family. She is paid less than forty thousand a year, qualifying her for Section 8 housing, despite her college degree and extensive experience. Samantha's questions hone in on the value systems of early childhood education (ECE). I argue that Samantha's words and the experiences of many others reflect the gendered racialization of ECE labor. By gendered racialization I am referring to Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) theorizing of racial formation theory and Priya Kandaswamy's (2012) complication of it. As will be further described, gendered racial formation is created through cultural representation and social policy. While much needs to be done to critically analyze social policy and its role in the racialization and gendering of the field, this paper will only attend to mapping the cultural representations found in early childhood education (ECE).

"Blue eyed and wide eyed," is how my coworkers described me when I first began working at this non-profit. Fresh out of college with a degree in Child Study, I spent most of my brain power thinking about how this organization functioned as both a relief and stressor for poor children and families. While I grappled with the morality of working there, my coworkers were dealing with problems that would soon consume my thoughts. I got hired at \$35,000 a year, what I thought was a relatively good starting salary for ECE and for someone my age. I was a young and naïve

teacher. In fact, when I was first hired I was not fully certified and therefore needed constant supervision by a more experienced teacher.

With an understanding of my coworkers' frustrations over this added workload, I entered conversations that brought to light just how different our two jobs were. Samantha, the woman who was bending her pregnant body to clean tables with me was getting paid only a few thousand more than I. She was the lead teacher in my classroom, had a Bachelor's degree and had been working in the field for nearly fifteen years. Prior to my hiring, this organization was following suit with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation standards for high quality care by striving to have a fully educated staff. For Samantha this meant going to school part time and working full time for eight years. For fellow teacher Idania an older woman from Honduras with nearly twenty years of experience in the field, it meant footing the bill for a college education or facing demotion. The message being sent to Idania, Samantha, myself and our other coworkers was that their combined thirty plus years of experience were not as important in the eyes of our employer as a diploma. The irony in all this was that I, a highly educated woman who majored in Child Development at an elite liberal arts school, was constantly turning to Idania and Samantha for training, help, and advice. When I began I didn't know how to change a diaper, let alone critically think about guidance and discipline. While Idania and Samantha's jobs are unstable and underpaid, my opportunities felt endless. Within days of being hired, the director of the center mentioned that I could easily become an administrator in the near future. My White womanhood with the added bonus of a college degree was a valuable asset.

As an already highly underpaid field, preschool teachers and child care workers are in the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for mean annual salary, making an average of \$13.74 per hour (Economic Policy Institute, 2015). Furthermore, for the majority

of ECE settings, personnel are the highest cost to the organization (Cochran, 2007). It has been argued elsewhere that a decision was made within the field of ECE of whether to push for worthy wages or for “quality” care. Nagasawa, Peters, & Swadener (2014) point out that quality care is a highly contested idea that is culturally dependent. In the Western context quality has often defaulted to the common sense ideology that positions ECE as a commodity (Cochran, 2007, p. 47) and that credentialing produces better outcomes as determined by the science of the field. These authors argue that the Western ideal of quality care has come at the expense of worthy wages.

Related research has attributed these notably low salaries to the feminization of the field and the devaluing of care professions in general. While K-12 schooling is generally understood as a legitimate field filled with worthy professions, early childhood education has been made synonymous with women’s work and thus, undeserving of legitimacy (Anne De Lair & Erwin, 2000, Bloch, 1991, Cannella, 1997). With 94% of the workforce comprising of women, much has been done to interrogate the feminization of the field (“Underpaid and Unequal,” 2016). For example, Bloch (1991) details how early childhood education has invested itself in science and psychology, traditionally male dominated fields, as a way to be legitimated and taken seriously. This investment has had serious pedagogical and sociocultural implications.

While feminists and women in the workforce writ large have interrogated the devaluing of women’s work in ECE, very little writing exists on the racialization of labor in the field.<sup>2</sup> Two recent reports stand out as leading the research on the racial hierarchy of ECE; The Center for American Progress (Ullrich, Hamm, & Herzfeldt-

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that while much research does not exist on the racialization of labor in the field, there is significant research by educators of Color on the ways race operates in the classroom. For further reading please see authors; Janice Hale, Gloria Boutte, Lisa Delpit, Michelle Salazar Pèrez, and Cinthya M. Saavedra,

Kamprath, 2016) report, "Underpaid and Unequal: Racial Wage Disparities in the Early Childhood Workforce," and the Migration Policy Institute's (Kashen, Potter, & Stettner, 2016) "Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field: Taking a Closer Look." With 40% of the workforce made up of people of Color (Kashen, Potter, & Stettner, 2016), the Center for American Progress reports that White workers on average earn the highest salaries with Black early childhood educators making 84 cents for every \$1 earned by their White counterparts and Latino workers earning on average 25 cents less than Whites (Ullrich, Hamm, & Herzfeldt-Kamprath, 2016). For workers of Color this comes out to an average loss of \$366 per month, certainly enough to cover utility bills and some groceries. Similarly, the Migrant Policy Institute reports that there are 321,000 immigrants and refugees working in the field of ECE and that 22% of those educators live below the poverty line (Park, McHugh, Zong, & Batalova, 2015). In addition, half of all ECE employees live in families eligible for social welfare resources, such as, TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, or EITC (Cannella, 1997). Significantly more research must be done on the statistics of racial wage disparities, especially for Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American populations both of which were left almost entirely out of these major studies. However, I echo the words of Kaomea (2005) in my belief that statistics have the potential to paint a colonizing picture and alone do not fully explain the historical trauma associated with them. Importantly, with or without the numbers these are stories and patterns deeply known by the people who experience them. This paper contributes to a much needed further analysis of why these disparities exist and what can be done about it.

Both of these ground breaking studies emphasize the implicit and structural barriers early childhood educators of Color face in accessing training programs, higher education, and credentials. They conclude with an argument that has been made elsewhere, asserting that these teachers are valuable in the workforce for the

cultural and linguistic diversity they provide for a growingly diverse population of children and policy must take into account their contributions to the field.

I do not doubt that children of Color need to see themselves in their early childhood educators, hear their heritage languages spoken, or that all children thrive in diverse environments. However, I aim to refocus the emphasis on such a child-centered approach which places value in women based on their relationship to children. Instead, I argue that women of Color in ECE are deserving of a livable salary and work conditions which value their skill, intellect, and epistemological contributions to both the field and society. Furthermore, I build on Glenn's (2000) argument that there must be an ideological and structural shift in how Western society understands care. Simply increasing the salary of early educators will not effectively solve the racialization of care; rather, we must move from liberal conceptions of the individual to notions of interdependence which understand care to be a central component of citizenship for all people. I argue that what Glenn (2000) refers to as the social organization of care is embedded in a gendered racialized project of the State, which is formed through social policy and cultural representation. Questions guiding my argument include, how do narratives, controlling images, and histories lead us to such a feminized racial hierarchy? I am responding to Samantha's original question, "They say they care about families, but what about our families? What about my babies?"

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

In order to answer this question, I must first outline the theoretical roots of gendered racial formation. This intersectional analysis is grounded in the canonical theorizing of Crenshaw's (1994) systemic research on the failures of feminist and anti-racist movements. Crenshaw's writing traces power throughout institutions, ultimately finding women of Color to be particularly susceptible to State and societal

violence. In thinking intersectionally and institutionally, I consider how power moves across time and space. Drawing from Crenshaw, I take up Brewer's (1993) and May's (2015) belief that White women's imperative for wage equality will not improve the situations of women of Color in the workforce, and furthermore, that men of Color initiatives for racial equality will not adequately respond to the gender disparities women of Color face. Brewer (1993) states, "women's work in the USA is gender/race divided. Disproportionate numbers of Black women are at the bottom of this division of labor, rooted in social meanings systems which get remade in the material context of social practice as well as the calculus of profit" (p.5). I use gendered racial formation to consider what Brewer refers to as the material context of social practice for all women of Color early childhood educators.

### **Gendered Racial Formation**

According to Omi & Winant (1994), race is a social construct built from the linkage between structures and representations. Racial projects do the ideological work of linking these two processes. In other words, "A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (p.56). I understand ECE to be one of many racial projects of the State, built from social policies (such as those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children) and cultural representations which will be further discussed. However, as stated ECE is a highly feminized field, divided along the lines of both race and gender, a complication that Omi & Winant do not attend to. For an intersectional analysis that takes these specificities into account, I use Priya Kandaswamy's (2012) theorizing of gendered racial formations. As Kandaswamy points out, by ignoring the role of gender in racial formations, Omi & Winant's theorizing actually reproduces the marginalization of women of Color. Referring to the use of gender violence in colonial conquest, Kandaswamy states, "The making of



race and the making of gender were thus inseparable rather than isolated processes, suggesting the importance of analyzing the gendered and sexualized dynamics of racial formation more broadly” (p. 30). With ECE positioned as one of the lowest paying fields, comprised of 94% women and 40% people of Color, it is clearly a gendered racial project.

### **Controlling Images**

Glenn (2010) suggests that the “social organization of care has been rooted in diverse forms of coercion that have induced women to assume responsibility for caring for family members and that have tracked poor, racial minority, and immigrant women into positions entailing caring for others” (p.5). I argue that Patricia Hill Collins (2000) theorizing of controlling images is one of the many ways that cultural representation has been a form of coercion in the field. She says controlling images, “are designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be natural, normal, and an inevitable part of everyday life” (p. 68). The study of controlling images requires an intersectional analysis because both race and gender play a significant role in determining the possibilities one has in accessing different kinds of work, which in turn impacts one’s class. In her historical analysis of race, gender, and labor Glenn (2010) states, “The race-gender segregation of jobs was in turn made to seem natural by assumptions about certain groups’ affinities and capabilities that suited them for the kinds of work they did” (p. 82). Glenn’s words echo those of Collins, once again emphasizing that controlling images are used to make sense of the kinds of work different people should be doing and the subsequent value of their work based on race and gender.

While Collins’ theory of controlling images is rooted in Black Feminist Thought and is written to the experiences of Black women, I suggest that controlling images, though racially specific, impact the work of all women of Color. My methodology is guided by the principles of Moraga (1981), who so beautifully wrote, “The danger lies

in ranking the oppressions. The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place” (p. 29). With these words, I acknowledge that this writing is as much about myself as anyone else. It is an institutional examination of how race and gender function in a particular field. In order to make this analysis I am expanding Collins’ theory of controlling images to make sense of the ways in which individuals both White and of Color and of various genders are positioned in ECE on the basis of their gendered racialization.

### **Hierarchies in the Field**

The racial hierarchy found in ECE today mirrors that of the powerfully violent controlling image of the domestic woman of Color and that of the domineering White mistress. Within ECE, 43% of assistants in the classroom are people of Color. An equally important statistic is that 65% of teachers or lead teachers are White (Ullrich, Hamm, & Herzfeldt-Kamprath, 2016). This gap only grows higher in the ranks, with White women significantly over-represented in administrative positions. For example, Latino workers comprise 19% of the total workforce but account for only 12% of center directors (Park, McHugh, Zong, & Batalova, 2015). For the everyday workers these job titles have significant consequences. Classroom assistants are often relegated to the more menial tasks of childcare, changing diapers, picking up the classroom, and disciplinary measures. Meanwhile, teachers and even more so administrators have greater access to training and educational opportunities. In addition, these roles encourage more legible intellectual activity, such as curriculum planning and classroom design.

### **Historical Trajectories**

The clear gendered and racial division in the public service sector mimics that of the historical racial gendered division in private household employment. Glenn (1991) writes, "It is necessary to specify the forms of exploitation and how they change over time in order to target those areas in most need of reform, and to identify potential sources of resistance to change" (p. 1332). Glenn's writing is particularly useful as across her publications she maps the ways in which women of Color from multiply vulnerable positions have been coercively employed. She outlines the ways in which various communities have been targeted as sources of cheap labor. For example, her writing shows how Mexican, Japanese, Black, and Native communities all have a common racialized experience of being coercively and often forcefully employed. For women of Color she writes that the gendered component of their racialized labor placed them in White households. While women writ large have been engaged in social reproduction labor, or "labor that maintains people on a daily basis and intergenerationally- work that women traditionally expanded in their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers" (Glenn, 1992, p.1332) people of Color have traditionally been viewed in American society as individual units of labor rather than as members of their own family units (Glenn, 1994, p. 5). For women of Color this has meant being denied the full role of wife, mother, & homemaker in their own homes by American society and instead being placed in the role of the domestic worker in the homes of White families. Each of these racially specific experiences of domestic employment were justified with the use of controlling images.

**The Mammy and the Matriarch.** Collins (2000) describes the mammy image as that of the docile and willingly obedient Black woman servant. While the controlling image of the mammy "typified the Black mother figure in the White home" (p. 73), the image of the Black matriarch was the conversely "bad" Black mother. Through this deeply racist ideology, Black mothers are understood as absent from Black homes and failing in their motherly duties. Imagery of the matriarch is

directly drawn from a government funded report written by former Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, the then Assistant Secretary of Labor. The Moynihan Report maliciously details how Black women are to be blamed for all of Black poverty (Office of Planning, Policy, and Research, 1965). Collins (2000) details the logic of the report by saying, "Assuming that Black poverty is passed on intergenerationally via value transmission in families, an elite White male standpoint suggests that Black children lack the attention and care allegedly lavished on White, middle class children and that this deficiency seriously retards Black children's achievement" (p. 74). Thus, Black women have been painted as the explanation for racialized class subordination.

As will be further discussed throughout this paper, early childhood educators of Color find themselves in a double bind through contradicting controlling images that are called upon by the State. As mammies Black mothers are cornered into caring for children other than their own. In turn, the State uses this against them to create the image of the matriarch, the absent Black mother. Part of the simultaneity of gendered racial formation is that it is also contradictory. Kandaswamy (2012) uses the contradictory demands of race and gender in regards to welfare to show how, "the same bodies can simultaneously be subject to different regulatory impulses and how the contradictory investments of the state are displaced or sutured over so that state power might appear unified when it is not" (p.33). Kandaswamy says "Rather than seeing these different dimensions of state power as developing in isolation from each other, it is necessary to center the processes by which divergent state interests become articulated alongside the displacements required to give state power its seeming coherence" (p.40). In other words, both race and gender are mobilized by the state simultaneously and at times in contradictory ways. This then refers back to Omi & Winant's belief that the state is structured by race. Though the state is dominantly understood as intervening in racial conflict, it is itself a site for racial conflict where the meanings of both race and gender are contested (p. 82).

**Domésticas.** The image of the domestic Latina worker, the maid, or the doméstica is a well-established and frequently called upon controlling image in American society. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) has written extensively on the experiences of Latina immigrant women and their work as domestic laborers in White homes. She argues that the controlling image of the mammy is now also found in images of Latinas as domestic workers (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007). However, Glenn (2010) has suggested that this controlling image as it pertains to Latinas has manifested itself in a different way than it has in Black communities. The controlling image of the maid has come to be that of a traditional homebound, overly fertile domestic drudge (Glenn, 2010, p.255). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) says that the ideology of the maid is articulated every time an employer says she loves her Latina domestic like a family member (p. 49).

The controlling image of the Latina domestic worker has within it an assumed hierarchy of labor in which White women are positioned as employers of Latina women. This dynamic is seen time and time again, often regardless of the class of the White women. For example, Glenn (2002) notes that in the few work places where Anglos and Mexican women worked side by side prior to the mid-1900s Anglo women most often held the cleaner jobs as checkers, sorters, and supervisors. Meanwhile, Mexicanas were taxed with the manual labor associated with these jobs (p. 156). This hierarchy is clearly established in the pay discrepancy seen. For example, in 1919 the Texas Welfare Commission found that Mexican laundry workers made an average of \$6 per week while American workers made on average \$16 per week. As will be further discussed, this same pattern is seen across ECE.

**Always already failing.** For Native women the story and the controlling image that narrates it is eerily similar. Kaomea (2005) powerfully writes of how Native mothers are trapped within a contradicting series of controlling images that ultimately predetermines them as “always, already failing mothers.” She says that

controlling images of the savage, hypersexual, and uncivilized Native woman, "...leads to the construction of indigenous parents and families as "always already" failing: "always" in the sense of a de-historicized notion of failing at parenting and "already" in the sense that even before an indigenous child such as mine is born, its expectant mother is "already" constructed as failing, and her child, consequently at risk" (pg. 91) Using her own experience as a Native Hawaiian mother she describes how the statistics surrounding infant mortality, literacy levels, school dropouts, alcoholism, and incarceration, set her into a panic as an expectant mother who was already written as failing according to American society and statistics.

For Native communities these historic controlling images, that remain vividly present, have manifested themselves in the removal of Native children from their homes and cultures. The Indian Boarding School movement, beginning in the mid-1800's operated as a genocidal project until 1973 when the era came to a close, with a remaining 60,000 Native children enrolled. Rooted in the logic of "kill the Indian, save the man," boarding schools served two documented purposes. Primarily, they functioned as sites of legalized mass murder with one in four children dying from violent and abusive conditions. Secondly, boarding schools functioned by attempting to strip Native children of their heritage culture, removing their identity as tribal and family members, turning them into individual units of labor (Adams, 1995).

In particular, Native girls in boarding schools were trained in domestic labor and proper behavior in White homes. Coercive and forced employment of Native children in White homes was, in fact, written into legislation. For example, California passed the Indenture Act of 1850, which allowed any American citizen to take custody of an Indian child and place her under apprenticeship in their home. The ideology deep within this legislation and boarding schools is that Native mothers and

families are incapable of caring for their children and that White families have a right to the labor of Native children (Glenn, 2002).

**Un-American.** Unlike many other racial minorities Asian immigrants have experienced an inconsistent set of controlling images which seem to vary across time and region. Glenn (2002) outlines how prior to World War 2, Asian Americans, specifically Japanese immigrants were written as “immoral” and “unassimilable.” She articulates how these two traits paired with perceived high fertility was read as a threat to White America. These controlling images then impacted Asian immigrants’ access to citizenship status. Written into the amendments of the Naturalization Act in 1870 was the statement that Asians are “ineligible for citizenship.” Imbedded in this logic is the belief that Asian immigrants are temporary laborers. The controlling images of “Other,” “foreign,” and “un-American,” have greatly limited the possibilities for employment for Asian immigrant women. For example, the most stereotypical forms of employment for Asian women have been built around maintaining the appearance of White women or appeasing the sexual desires of White men. As nail artists, laundresses, and occasionally as live-in school girls, Asian women’s labor in the U.S. has been rooted, not always in the White home, but in service to White women.

**Managing mothers.** Just as controlling images have been used to naturalize underpaying women of Color in White households, images (though not controlling in the same ways) of White men and women have also been used to make sense of this relationship. While White men were participating in the public market economy outside the home, White women were tasked with what Barbara Katz Rothman (2000) calls managing motherhood. In this role, White women were able to preserve two contradictory components of White femininity. They were able to be motherly and in the home, while also maintain themselves as dainty, clean, and fragile. However, as many of us know, the practice of caring for children or one’s home is far

from these characterizations. Maintaining a family and a home is messy business. Thus, women of Color were employed to ease this contradiction. The menial, labor intensive, and difficult work of motherhood was imparted upon domestic laborers and used to create the image of the mammy. As Collins (2000) points out, "the White political economy depends upon this gendered racial division." Or, as Brown (1992) states, "White women live the lives they do in large part because women of Color live the ones they do" (p. 298). Furthermore, White women have historically expressed a sense of entitlement to the labor of women of Color. As Omi & Winant originally theorized, racial formations are equal parts cultural representations and social policies. In this case, cultural representations in the form of controlling images have positioned women of Color as laborers for White women. Social policies such as the CA Indenture Act help to solidify those cultural representations.

### **ECE and Controlling Images**

ECE has, unknowingly or not, mobilized these controlling images by employing women of Color in domestic low wage labor which then reinforces the very controlling images in which they are trapped. Working long days, sometimes weekends and federal holidays, many of the women of Color I worked alongside were unable to spend the time they wished with their families. This denial of time in the private home only set them up for failure in the eyes of the Moynihan Report and the State. Samantha once described to me her schedule prior to finishing her degree. She worked all day, went to school several nights a week, and then came home late at night, only to spend her weekends doing homework. While this separation must have been undeniably stressful for both her and her young children, the external threat of the controlling image of the Latina controlling image is also painfully present in her description.

The description of Samantha's schedule mirrored the narratives of Black domestics nearly a century ago. For example, in 1912, a Black child nurse referred to



her existence as a “treadmill life.” She stated that she was able to go home “only once in every two weeks, every other Sunday afternoon- even then I’m not permitted to stay all night. I see my own children only when they happen to see me on the streets when I am out with the children [of her mistress] or when my children come to the yard to see me, which isn’t often, because my white folks don’t like to see their servants’ children hanging around their premises” (Glenn, 2002). The similarities between their work lives and forced lack of private home life debunks the dominant narratives of racial progress in the US. Glenn (1992) and others (Bloch, 1991) have traced the movement of domestic labor in the private home to the public sphere and have shown that the racial dynamics have remained nearly the same.

### **ADDRESSING POVERTY IN ECE**

Samantha is a Section Eight housing recipient, meaning she receives government funding for her rent costs due to her low annual income, family size, good moral character, among other things. When I found this out I was hit with the irony of an organization that claimed to alleviate the trauma and stress of poverty for families. Head Start is another example of a national non-profit who’s aim is to end the cycle of poverty through early childhood intervention. However, Head Start has a workforce in which nearly half of all lead teachers are people of Color (Ullrich, Hamm, & Herzfeldt-Kamprath, 2016) and the average salary of a Head Start teacher with an Associate’s degree was \$12.20 per hour in 2012 (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Ascribing to the White male standpoint, positioned by Collins (2000), Head Start attributes poverty to the neglect of young children of Color and thus a failure of mothers of Color. To ameliorate these failures in the private home (the failures of the matriarch), the State, in this case through a non-profit, then hires women of Color in the public low wage service sector in an underpaid and overworked job. Through this employment, the State then positions these women as

poor unsuccessful mothers, making their children candidates for programs such as Head Start, programs through which they are employed.<sup>3</sup>

**The infantile citizen.** While our employer claimed to work in opposition to poverty and homelessness, this non-profit positioned Samantha as particularly vulnerable to these same systems. When Samantha asks, "They say they care about families, but what about our families? What about my babies?", she is implicitly addressing the controlling images in which she is trapped. She is not only addressing the futility of these non-profits but also perhaps shedding light upon their malice. Not only are organizations such as Head Start doing little to actually address poverty, they are in effect constantly reproducing it. Lauren Berlant's (1993) theorizing of the "infantile citizen," has been one of many responses to questions like Samantha's. Berlant argues that US politics are always fashioned for a future incipient citizen. She argues that the repression of citizens of today is justified with the belief that future citizens are being protected. Thus, the children receiving excellent care at this non-profit is at the expense of Samantha's well-being and a worthwhile investment. NAEYC provides a very clear example of the use of the infantile citizen in their, "Call for Excellence in Early Childhood Education." NAEYC (2016) justifies these standards by saying,

We can invest now in our children and families and enjoy long term savings, with a more vibrant nation of healthy, achieving children, and more stable families. Or we can fail to make the investment and pay the price: increased delinquency, greater educational failures, lowered productivity, less economic competitiveness, and fewer adults prepared to be effective loving parents to the next generation of children.

Importantly, this statement was published by NAEYC to justify their recent requirement that accredited centers strive to have at least 75% of its staff have

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<sup>3</sup> It must also be noted that the benevolence of Head Start is a highly contested subject. While much research suggests it plays a role in the reproduction of poverty, it remains one of the highest paying ECE programs and does offer room for advancement for its workers, which as noted in the text are primarily women of Color.

Bachelor degrees. For White women in the field such a call to excellence is likely welcomed, however, the impact upon women of Color has the potential to be incredibly damaging. The Call for Excellence seems to suggest that the failure of early childhood educators to obtain higher education is the cause for poverty in the US. The statement frames future citizens as units of potential labor by referencing their future productivity. Furthermore, it reinforces a standard for “effective loving parents.”

***The racialized infantile citizen.*** Using Berlant’s argument, it would seem that Samantha’s labor and the workforce of ECE in general is a sacrifice for the children of tomorrow. This is highly common rhetoric in the field as a director once told me, “you are doing God’s work.” A controlling image that entrapped me as a White woman in ECE was that I was inherently motherly, intuitively good with children, and doing exactly the work I was meant to do. My sacrifices through time and low pay were understood as a donation and commitment to patriotism and raising the next generation. However, as Andrea Smith (2010), Angela Davis (1983), and José Esteban Muñoz (2007) point out, the gender racialized projects of the State are working to reproduce a cultural representation in which the future of “the child is indeed always already White” (Muñoz, 2007, p. 363). Simultaneously, Kaomea (2005) argues that Native mothers are written as always already failing. She states, “Dominant discourses that construct Indigenous children as needy, helpless victims while simultaneously stigmatizing their parents and families as deficient caretakers, suggests that to save Indigenous children, the parent’s influence must be minimized—a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of killing the Indian to save the man” (p. 92). Smith and Davis argue that through genocidal and eugenic projects the State has worked to make the US population literally White. In order to show how un-concerned the State is with protecting the future of children of Color, Smith looks at how colonial conquest has historically targeted children of Color. She quotes Colonel John Chivington, the leader

of the Sand Creek massacre who ordered his men to mutilate the reproductive organs of Native adults and to kill children, specifically because, "nits make lice." Smith says, "In this context, the Native Child is not the guarantor of the reproductive future of white supremacy; it is the nit that undoes it" (p. 48). Smith's analysis of the colonial fear of Native children and the futures they represent may be used to explain why ECE traps both children and mothers of Color in cycles of poverty.

Davis further debunks Berlant's theorizing by pointing to the historical trajectory of the reproductive rights movement. By describing the widespread and brutalizing practice of sterilizing women of Color, Davis shows how the valuing of children in the US has always been racialized. While White women are denied the right to reproductive justice as it is understood to be their duty to reproduce Whiteness, women of Color have had to fight for their own right to reproduce. She points out how in a State of the Union address President Roosevelt spoke out against abortion calling it, "willful sterility- the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race suicide" (p. 209). Here Roosevelt directly connects race and gender with citizenship and articulates the US's investment in the reproduction of Whiteness. Thus, Samantha's questions, "They say they care about families, but what about our families? What about my babies?", point to how the State has shown and continues to show care for White children but not Samantha's family or others of Color.

### **White Women and the Work We Do**

It is equally important to give time and attention to what this gendered racialized system means for White women in the field of ECE. In documenting the narratives of Black domestics, Glenn (1992) records a quote from a woman named Nancy White that I will use to analyze the contemporary gendered racial situation in ECE. She says,

My mother used to say that the black woman is the white man's mule and white woman is his dog. Now, she said that to say this: we do the heavy

work, and get beat whether we do it well or not. But the White woman is closer to the master and he pats them on the head and lets them sleep in the house, but he ain' gon' treat neither one like he was dealing with a person. (p. 148)

Drawing from this quote, Glenn (1992) says, "Rather than challenge the inequity in the relationship with their husbands, white women pushed the burden onto women with even less power" (p. 17). I believe this to be true today as the racialized hierarchy of a highly feminized field suggests that White women continue to do little to challenge the inequity of their work. Rather than radically challenge the notions of women's work and reproductive labor in the home, White women took part in the shift from childcare in the private sphere to childcare in the public market. Not only were they participants in this shift, White women continue to be active agents in advocating for comprehensive high quality child care. For many, this comes from a personal need as more and more middle class White women enter the job market and are in need of child care services. Thus, an opportunity is lost on White women to challenge individualist investments in capitalism and to reconstruct the social organization of care. Rather, as Glenn stated, the work is relayed to women of Color through coercive means.

While White women continue to pass on the duty of childcare to women of Color, control stays within Whiteness as White women are overrepresented in the academy in Child Study, Child Development, and as administrators in ECE. Bloch (1991) describes, "Being "scientific" in theory, method of research, and pedagogical applications was part of becoming or appearing more professional, especially as many associated with Child Development or Early Education were associated with Home Economics and what was thought to be a female field" (p. 9). As White's statement reflects, rather than question the feminization of Home Economics, White women invested in the scientific theorizing of White men. For example, the Laura

Spellman Rockefeller Memorial spent over \$7 million in the 1920's researching and implementing scientific child-rearing methods, coining the term scientific motherhood (Rose, 1999). With such a strong link to science, the development of ECE pedagogy was largely directed by the theorizing of White men. A contemporary example of the scientific theorizing in ECE is the dominant approach of "Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogy," which attempts to quantify and create universal developmental stages (Bloch, 1991).

Rothman's theorizing of "managing mothers" is useful for thinking about how control and power function within the racialized hierarchy of ECE. In describing the work of domestics, Glenn (1992) argues, "Hierarchy Is elaborated through a detailed division of labor that separates conception from execution and allows those on top to control the work process...Ranking is based ostensibly on experience, education and formal credentials" (p. 23). Through social policies like those of NAEYC, ECE justifies its racial hierarchy through education credentials. Those on top of the ladder, who are mostly White women, control the work process through pedagogical theorization, which is deeply embedded in the thought of White men. This brings us back to the words of Collins and her belief that the White male standpoint positions Black children as neglected by their mothers and in need of early childhood intervention. White women develop pedagogy that is invested in the White male belief that Black children are inferior to White children. Thus, the work process is controlled by White women as they dictate and mandate pedagogies that are implemented and acted out in the classroom by primarily women of Color.

In other work, Glenn (2010) shows how White women have long been the dictators of forced care labor. She cites how White women reformers in the 1800's declared themselves to be moral guardians of society as a whole based on their experiences as "keepers of the home" (p. 8). Using this logic, White women became central actors in the colonial conquest of land and labor. In particular, White women

were tasked with teaching women and girls of Color proper White methods of domesticity. Glenn outlines three examples of this teaching in the 1900's. First, she describes how Native girls were removed from their families and placed in White homes where they were taught domestic skills. Next, she shows how reformatory programs for female convicts were opportunities for White women to exercise control over the teaching of proper femininity, which included reproductive labor. Lastly, Glenn shows how Americanization programs for immigrant women forced immigrants into White domestic roles. These three examples of White teachings of domesticity, are mirrored in the contemporary racial hierarchy of ECE. As in the 1900's, White women are once again dictating how White children and children of Color should be cared for. Furthermore, these methods are rooted in the theorizing of White men scientists.

Thus, most White women have sadly made themselves blind to their very participation in the feminization of women's work. Even more so we have failed to see how our "do good" initiatives to end poverty are grounded in racist ideology and the perpetuation of poverty itself. My experiences as a student of Child Development and as an early childhood educator support such claims about the gendered racialization of labor. I spent endless hours memorizing the stages of development theorized by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Freud, all White men dictating the development of children with the justification of science. Working in the field I then evaluated children against these standards of development for a drastically lower salary than the creators of the theories themselves. Inevitably, children of Color were positioned as inadequate against the mandated standards and more often than not we were told to attribute these perceived failings to the work of their mothers. One of my more infuriating coworkers, Molly, was a White woman from a wealthy background and a deep seeded investment in her heterosexuality and participation in reproductive labor. On my first day on the job she said to me, "You'll be blown away

with how far behind these kids are. It's sad, just so sad. Their literacy skills are pathetic. So messed up how these moms get free day care and then don't even read to their kids at night." Subscribing and reproducing the White male standpoint Collins discusses, Molly truly believed that she was "doing God's work," by reading books about White suburban children to poor children of Color for what she described to be a "dismal" salary. What was truly sad, was that working next to us were Samantha and Idania, who have told me that they wished they had more time to read books to their kids. Molly's words were criminalizing Samantha and Idania, drawing from the controlling images of the matriarch and the related welfare queen. Whether she knew it or not, she was ascribing to an ideology that placed direct blame on mothers of Color for what the White male standpoint has arbitrarily declared to be a delay in children of Color. Like myself, Molly did not stay with this organization for more than a year. We both went on to graduate school to further theorize ECE.

### **Conclusions**

In her analysis of domestic labor in Los Angeles Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) describes a story of Latina domestic workers joking among themselves, recognizing that it would take only two days of their absence for them to "shut it all down." In their jokes is an understanding that without their labor American society would cease to exist as we know it, as it is dependent upon their skill and contribution. Their phrasing is important because it recognizes that without childcare, White households and the professional jobs that support them would not be self-sufficient. Hondagneu-Sotelo says, "In their own conversations, they reclaim what their job experiences often deny them: social recognition and dignity" (p. 12). It is important to note that while many White women have remained blind to the gendered racialization of ECE, most women of Color have not. The writings of the women of Color authors cited here are testament to the many ways in which recognition and resistance takes place. Furthermore, the reconceptualist movement in early childhood education, led



by the organization Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education, has been significant in making space for such conversations to formally take place in academia and beyond (Bloch, Swadener, Cannella, 2014).

Moving outside of this highly racist and sexist design requires scholars and practitioners in ECE to take up different epistemological understandings of reproductive labor, mothering, and children. Collins (1994) and Kaomea (2005) make important calls for action that reimagine how care can be conceptualized and implemented. Collins begins to develop an Afrocentric feminist analysis of motherhood which may be a good first step in understanding how controlling images function and how communities of Color, particularly Black communities have built alternative support networks of care. Collins relays the narrative of a Black woman named Brooke who built communal childcare support and kinship systems with peers. Collins says of this, "Brooke's experiences demonstrate how the African-American cultural value placed on cooperative childcare traditionally found institutional support in the adverse conditions under which so many Black women mothered" (p. 154). Her analysis of Brooke's words show that alternative systems of care already exist in the US and are, in fact, how women of Color have managed to raise families in the context of the racialization of ECE.

Kaomea (2005) re-centers the conversation on families of Color, like Collins suggesting that networks of care already exist outside of child care centers. Furthermore, she suggests that early childhood organizations have the potential to empower Native Hawaiian families by supporting family-care options and building upon the learning that already happens within the home. She states, "Rather than viewing Indigenous families as a negative influence to be compensated for, I suggest we view them as a strength to build upon" (p. 92). By shifting the focus back towards the strengths of communities of Color, caretakers of Color are valued for their skill and intellect in the raising of children.

Furthermore, Collins bring to light alternative epistemological understandings of care which center women of Color experience and the linkages between reproductive labor and self-determination. As she so beautifully states, “‘Work for the day to come,’ is motherwork, whether it is on behalf of one’s own biological children, or for the children of one’s own racial or ethnic community, or to preserve the earth for those children who are yet unborn” (1994, p. 48). In reconsidering both the social policy and cultural representation that goes into forming the gendered racialization of ECE, Collins provides an alternative social structure and epistemological standpoint with which to start. Her words may in fact be the first steps to answering Glenn’s call for a new social organization of care. Answering Samantha’s question requires shifting from a child-centered examination of ECE to a gendered and racialized look at the labor of ECE. It means reexamining narratives of racial progress and “do good” anti-poverty initiatives. To truly respond to Samantha’s question will require a societal abandonment of liberal individualism and uptake of communal methods of care. For us all to work for the day to come.

## Epilogue

*In a bustling early childcare classroom, it was a usual day with all sorts of wails and giggles in the background. Out of the corner of my eye I watched as a conversation between children escalated and as a fellow teacher made moves to intervene. I was closer and I saw a Black hand rise to strike. I grabbed his small brown wrists with a tight grip, stopping its momentum. He looked up at me, panic-stricken, and said defiantly, precisely, "Don't touch my body." My White hands withdrew instantly as he bolted off and I listened as a different White teacher chastised him for running in the classroom. I turned away confused and stroked the blond hair of the child who I thought had almost been hit.*

I first applied to the School of Social Transformation's Social and Cultural Pedagogy MA Program with this scenario in mind. I vividly remember the fear and confusion of the classroom. The anxiety was worsened by the sense that there was nowhere for me to go to formally reflect. So when moments like this happened I was left feeling like I needed more vocabulary, time, and space to think through how power moves in an ECE classroom. I wrote in my personal statement:

I am applying to the Arizona School of Social Transformation's Social and Cultural Pedagogy Master's program to further interrogate this representative moment of power and authority in the early childhood classroom. This moment has stuck with me as exemplary of my role within systems of power and how my positionality within these systems affects others. The Social and Cultural Pedagogy program will allow me to further deconstruct how race, gender, and sexuality function in pedagogy through the School of Social Transformation's intersectional approach.

This project reflects the theoretical work I've done over the course of my time at ASU to respond to the scenario above and so many others that keep me constantly questioning my positionality and purpose in the field of ECE. The Social and Cultural Pedagogy (SCP) MA program describes itself as focusing, "on the study of learning beyond schooling, delving into research, theory and practice for non-formal education across cultures, ages and education levels." Using the material realities of

early childhood educators, this project importantly brings research and theory to practice. It looks at education not solely from the experiences of students or the standards of quality placed upon educators, but instead addresses how each of these dimensions impact labor in the field. Each of my courses in SCP have helped bring me to this final product. My methodological principles were thought through in the course, *Justice Research Methods*. My theoretical frameworks and my grounded-ness in intersectional feminism was developed in *Mapping the Intersections of Gender*. Finally, the analysis and heart of the paper was explored in *Introduction to Social and Cultural Pedagogy* and *Foundations of Social Transformation*.

I am thankful for the time I've had at ASU and specifically in SST to be challenged to think critically and holistically about the world around me. I'll be leaving here with a greater sense of my place and purpose and more importantly with further lines of inquiry. This study has reminded me of why I am in academia and why I look forward to getting out of it. My experience in ECE and my work in graduate school has been a dialectical relationship. ECE provides me with endless power relations to interrogate, while graduate school has provided me the space to attend to those very questions. Ultimately though, I struggled to be motivated in my writing and found myself yearning to be in the "real" world. I leave SCP with a new and essential skill. Throughout my time here and through this paper I have begun to develop the ability to apply critical thought to my workplace. What may it mean for me to read the Combahee River Collective statement with Idania and Samantha? How can I enter my workplace at Sojourner with a greater understanding of the labor of caring? How can I empower the families around me to reinvest in their inherent parenting skills? How is the university itself contingent upon *Hope in Poverty*, or Sojourner Center, or Perryville Prison? And most importantly, what does my participation mean in each of these spaces?

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